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THE

WHOLE WORKS

OF THE

REV. JOHN HOWE, M. A.

WITH

A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

IN EIGHT VOLUMES.

VOL. V.

CONTAINING

I. THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN REFERENCE TO PARTICULAR PERSONS, IN NINETEEN SERMONS, ON JOHN 3. 6. AND GAL. 5. 25.

II. THE PROSPEROUS STATE OF THE CHRISTIAN INTEREST BY A PLENTIFUL EFFUSION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, IN FIFTEEN SERMONS, ON EZEKIEL 39. 2.

III. THE OBLIGATIONS FROM NATURE AND REVELATION, TO FAMILY RELIGION AND WORSHIP, IN SIX SERMONS, ON JOSHUA 24. 15.

IV. THE VANITY OF A FORMAL PROFESSION OF RELIGION, CONSIDERED IN EIGHT SERMONS, ON TITUS 1. 16.

EDITED BY THE

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THE OFFICE

AND

WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,

IN EVERY AGE,

With reference to particular Persons:

CONSIDERED IN

SEVERAL SERMONS

On John. III. 6. and Gal. v. 25.

TO MRS. HOWE.

MADAM,

IT was apprehended the entire thoughts of this great man, upon so important a subject, might be very useful to the world, and acceptable to many: and though they are only a specimen of his ordinary course of preaching, without any finishing hand, or further design, or perhaps, always his ripest thoughts; yet they carry the lively signatures of the admirable genius, and excellent spirit, which always appeared in his composures, and rendered them so peculiarly fit to instruct and impress the minds of men. Whosoever considers the compass and variety of the matter, the thread and connexion of the thoughts, the striking imagery, and the pertinence and pungency of the expression, will see reason to admire the vast capacity of the author, and be easily disposed to forgive any lesser neglects and escapes; especially when he only proposed to speak familiarly and without any written notes, and allowed himself a liberty in expressing the well digested and disposed conceptions of his mind.

It will be necessary for your satisfaction, as well as the readers, to assure you, that the same care has been taken, and the same method observed, in reviewing and transcribing this part of the subject, as was used in the other; as the manuscript was written by the same skilful and diligent hand.

The intimacy of a long friendship, and mutual respect, the endearments of the nearest relation, for several of the latter years of his life; the high honour you always paid him, and the singular value he expressed for you, living and dying; give you the best title to these two volumes of posthumous discourses of the Spirit, and of family prayer; and to any respect we are capable of shewing you. We believe the noble argument as well as the excellent author, will be peculiarly acceptable and delightful to you, who were so well acquainted with his spirit and preaching; and may contribute to a well grounded peace of mind in a clearer discerning of a regenerate state; and to your daily walking in the Spirit, and improvement in the spiritual life.

This is the sincere desire of,

Honoured Madam,

Your respectful humble servants.

Goodman's-Fields,
July, 9, 1726.

W. HARRIS.
JOHN EVANS.

SERMON I.*

John iii. 6 latter part.

That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit.

THE apostle represents the different states of men, according to the different temper of their minds, as they are either carnal or spiritual; the misery and deadliness of the former; that "to be carnally minded is death:" the life and peace which is involved in the other; that "to be spiritually minded is life and peace." Rom. 8. 6. We are presented in this text with a view of the two great fountains of that carnality and spirituality, which are themselves so great fountains of evil and good, unto the children of men, according as the one or the other hath place in them. The whole verse presents us with a view of both; "that which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit": though I am to insist, as my design requires, only upon the latter. Some perhaps, taking some notice, that there is a universal death reigning over this world, by reason of that carnality which hath spread itself through it; may be prone to inquire, From whence is it, that so prevailing a carnality should so mortally have tainted the spirits of men every where? And this our Lord gives no other account of, and only resolves the matter, into ordinary human propagation; "that which is born of the flesh, is flesh." His account is not such as seems to aim at gratifying the curious, but such as wherein the sounder minded might very well be expected to acquiesce. It being taken for granted, that the higher original of human nature, was very well understood and known; it might seem a sufficient account of the original of that corruption, which is now connate with the nature of man; that from apostate creatures, such as were like themselves have descended, and what is born of the flesh, is nothing else

* Preached November 25th, 1677, at Cordwainer's Hall.

but flesh: it being manifest that our Saviour intends to comprehend under that name, with the nature of man, the corruption which is now adhering to it. But serious and awakened inquirers, would not surcease here, though they were never so well satisfied thus far; but at least having gotten an intimation that there is a design on foot, for the restoring of life and peace among men, who were universally sunk into carnality, earthliness and death; they would carry the inquiry farther: that is, In what way this is ever to be brought to pass; by whom it is to be effected; what course is to be taken to bring about so happy and glorious a change, with any of this wretched and forlorn world? At least they would take notice that here and there is a renewed spirituality appearing, and putting forth itself to open view; though there is too little of it, the Lord knows. Why whence is it, how comes it to pass, that here and there, we can perceive spirit and life flourishing afresh in the world, which was so universally over-run with carnality and death! This matter our Lord gives an account of in the words which I have designed more especially to consider; and resolves it wholly into a spiritual production. This is owing to nothing else but the spirit, or a new kind of creation, and generation: the Spirit of the living God has taken the matter into his own hands to recover and revive and raise up life and spirit, out of this wretched world, which is so lost and buried in flesh and sin. What is born of the Spirit, is spirit: if there is any such thing as spirit, any thing worthy of that name to be found now among men; that spirit is not of man, but the production of the Eternal, Almighty Spirit.

And certainly to such whose hearts are deeply and thoroughly concerned about a matter of this consequence, this of our Lord here cannot but be a very grateful discovery, and carry with it a very pleasant and joyful sound; that there is so great and mighty an undertaker, who is engaged in this affair, thus to retrieve things among men, and make life and spirit spring up in this world, so universally under the dominion of death. Nor can it be more grateful to some than it is certainly necessary to all; and we may wonder that it should not be more generally apprehended so, and that more eyes are not looking wishly round about. What, is there no deliverer; no one to undertake? Is there no one suitable to such an undertaking as this; or who will engage in it? To repair the ruins of perishing flesh, and restore the life of God among men, who were alienated from the life of God? But, alas! instead of such solicitous inquiries, it appears, we are fallen into an age, wherein some deny, and others deride, and most utterly disregard the operations of the blessed and glorious Spirit of God,

for such purposes. There are multitudes to whom the mention of such a thing is matter of laughter. What, to have the Spirit! for men to talk of having the Spirit!—And there are a great many more, we have reason to suppose, who do as little concern themselves, whether they ever are the subjects of such operations of this Spirit, as if they were yet to learn, or had never heard, whether there were any Holy Ghost; as is said concerning some, Acts xix. 2.

It is therefore my design and purpose from sundry texts of Scripture, which may successively suit our purpose, to assert unto you the office of the Holy Ghost, in reference to the refining the spirit of men, and restoring the life of God among them; to shew that such a work is attributed to it; to let you see the necessity of so great an undertaker for this work; and his abundant sufficiency for it; to shew you by whose procurement, and for whose sake, and in whose name, it is employed and set on work; and in what way, and through what dispensation it is communicated, and by what methods and steps and degrees, it carries on this work upon the spirits of the elect of God, till having brought them to sow to the Spirit, they do at length of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

The scripture which I have now read doth plainly hold forth so much in general, as that it doth belong to the Holy Ghost, and is attributed and ascribed to it, to produce spirit, and bring forth such a thing as spirit in them who appertain to God, and are in purpose, and shall be actually, taken into communion and participation with him. For if we refer this verse to the foregoing verses of the chapter, we find our Saviour designedly insists upon this argument of regeneration; and doth not only discover to us that there is such a thing, but gives some account wherein it doth consist, or what kind of work it is; and represents the indispensable necessity of it to any man's entrance into the kingdom of God; that is, his coming into it, or seeing, and having any part in it. And so the truth which we shall recommend to you as both answering the text and our present purpose, is, that there is a work to be done upon whomsoever shall be taken into the kingdom of God, by his own blessed Spirit, whereby they are to be created, or begotten, spirit of that Spirit. We have three things before us which require our consideration, in order to the more distinct and clear notion of it.

I. The effect to be wrought, or produced; which is here called by the name of the spirit.

II. The author or productive cause of this great effect, it is called with an emphasis, the Spirit.

III. The way or manner of production: and that is said to

be by begetting, or being born: for so it is indifferently rendered.

I. We are to consider the product or the effect wrought, and that is defined by the name spirit; what is born or begotten of the Spirit, is spirit. It is needful to give some account here what we are not to understand by it, and then what we are.

1. It is very manifest we are not to understand by it the natural spirit of a man; for our Saviour is not speaking here of bringing men into the world, but bringing them into the church: He is not speaking of such a sort of begetting whereby men are produced, but christians. Nor is it a distinct substance from that, or another substance diverse from the spirit of a man; for then a regenerate person, and an unregenerate; the same person in his unregenerate, and in his regenerate state, would substantially differ from himself; and that you may easily apprehend how absurd it would be. But,

2. As to the reason of the name and the more general import of it; by spirit we are to understand something spiritual, and which is of a spiritual nature; the abstract being put for the concrete, which is a very ordinary elegance in the Scripture; as well as it is many times in a contrary sense: You were darkness, but now ye are light in the Lord, Eph. 5. 8. The name is no more intended to hold forth to us, spirit, considered under a merely natural notion, without any adjunct, than, flesh, is intended to signify without any adjunct, and only in a merely natural sense. The thing which in general is intended to be held forth to us by this name, is, that frame of holiness, which is inwrought in souls by the Spirit of God in regeneration; and which because it is a spiritual production, most agreeable to its productive cause, is therefore called here by the name of spirit. It is something which is many times in Scripture held forth to us by such other names as these; sometimes it is called simply by the name of light; "Now are ye light in the Lord;" as if this product were nothing else but a beam of vigorous vital light, darted down from heaven into the hearts of men. Sometimes it is called by the name of life; that is used, it is true, as an expression of a larger extent, than for the internal work of the Spirit, but it comprehends that too; "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." John v. 45. Many times it is so used as that the circumstances of the place do determine it more limitedly, to that peculiar sense. It is sometimes expressed by the seed of God, an incorruptible seed which is put into the souls of men. 1 Pet. 1. 23. 1 John. 3. 8, 9. 10. Sometimes it is called the new creature. In Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature, Gal. 6. 15.

If any man is in Christ he is a new creature. It is very usual to speak of the effect, and the operation too, by which that effect is wrought, the former under the name of creature: the latter under the name of creation: as here it is spoken of as a thing begotten; and the causative action, under the name of begetting. It is sometimes called the new man; the image of God; and God's workmanship. These different forms of expression, and if there are any more which are not in my thoughts, which are parallel to these, are only intended to signify one and the same thing; and what is here signified by the name of spirit.

But to give you somewhat a more particular account of this thing, this being, this creature, which is here signified by the name of spirit. Of this we have said it is not a distinct substance from the spirit of a man, and yet we must know concerning it in the

(1.) Place, that it is a distinct thing; or something, though not of another substance, which is yet superadded to the spirit of a man; and which the spirit of a man, considered according to its mere naturals, is destitute of; and which therefore lies without the whole sphere and compass of mere nature, or any of the improvements thereof. It is spoken of in the Scripture as a thing put on: Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness Col. 4. 10. There is something put off, and laid away; the old man, with his deeds. This shews it to be an adjunct, or a thing superadded to us; which is not only out of the compass of our natures, but is no more to be conceived as comprehended in that state, than a man's clothes which he puts on, are comprehended in the notion of his body. And in that it is called a new thing, as the new creature and the new man; it shews it to be an additional thing.

(2.) Though it is diverse and distinct from the spirit of a man; yet it is a most intimately inherent thing, and is most closely united, wherever it comes to obtain and take place. It is a spirit which gets into a man's spirit, a spirit put into spirit. That you may be renewed in the spirit of your minds, Eph. 4. 23. Create in me a clean heart, renew a right spirit within me, Ps. li. 10. It is the divine Spirit which is the formal renovating principle by which we are renewed; and our former natural spirit is the subject of it. And it is a thing which most inwardly seats and centers itself in a man's soul, and takes possession of his inmost soul, which is called the spirit of the mind; and which we must conceive to be to the soul, as the heart is to the body, so very inward and middle a part, and upon the account of which analogy it is that the name of heart is so often transferred thither to signify the inward part, or the

very innermost of the inner man. There it is that the Spirit doth most intimately inhere and reside. It is not a thing which lies in the surface of a man; or consists in outward forms, or empty shews, or fruitless talk; but it is something which is got into a man's heart, and hath insinuated and conveyed itself there.

(3.) It is alterative of its subject, or of that nature to which it is adjoined. It is so in it, as to make a very great alteration within, and to work a change where it comes. As leaven, to which this very thing is compared by our Lord which he here calls spirit, hath in it that fermentative virtue, by which it strangely alters the lump into which it is put, and whereto it is adjoined. It is incredible according to the accounts the chymists give, how very little and minute a portion shall quite alter and transform the mass into which it is put, so as to make it quite another thing. Such a thing is this begotten spirit, it is alterative of its subject; and when it gets within a man, it makes him quite another thing from what he was. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; or which is all one, there is a new creature in him. Sometimes the whole man is spoken of as the subject of this production, and we are said to be new creatures, and the new creation is spoken of as being in us. It only carries this signification with it, that when a man is said to be begotten or regenerated, it is only said to be so *secundum quid*, or in this peculiar respect; as having such a thing of new production now put into him. It is such a great change which is made, as that all things which were old, are said to be done away, and all that remains to be made new, 2 Cor. v. 17. This is nothing else but the same Spirit which is got into the heart of a man, and makes its subject new; that is, to become a new heart and a right spirit, where it comes to obtain. It is not so with every thing which is put into another, or whereof another thing is contained; you may put water into a bason, and it alters it nothing; but this is such a thing which alters that which it is put into, and makes it quite another thing; like putting some spirits into that water which changes the colour and quality of it.

(4.) It is universally diffused in its subject, as it is in its nature alterative of it. It is a thing universally diffused through the whole subject wherein it comes; whence it is that the operation also is universal, and it makes a thorough change. They are very comprehensive expressions which the apostle uses concerning holiness or sanctification, (1 Thes. v. 23.) where he prays on the behalf of the Thessalonians; That God would sanctify them wholly, or throughout, that is in their whole spirit, soul and body: he distinguishes these; probably

meaning by the former, the soul, as rational; by the second, the soul as sensitive; and by the third, the corporeal body. It is plain this same created, begotten spirit, being designed to repair what was impaired by sin, must take place and spread itself as far as sin had done. That had vitiated and depraved the whole man, and is therefore called, a man; the old man; as having extended itself to all the powers, and faculties, and all the parts of a man: it is a man in a man. This spirit therefore is to be a man in a man too, and must spread into all the same powers and parts, which the former had done, and make a new man. Though it is true indeed, that the intelligent soul of man can only be formally the subject of this change, yet sin is by a sort of participation in the sensitive soul, and in the external senses and parts of the body; and so must grace or holiness too. It is strange rhetoric the apostle uses in that collection of passages which we find in Rom. 3. from 10. onward, out of certain places of the old testament. The apostle designs to represent not only how universally sin had spread itself among all men; but how it had spread itself through the whole of every man: as if they were so very full of sin, and so under the possession and power of it, that they belched it out of their throats, and through their lips; acted it with their hands; and made haste to it with their feet: Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they have used deceit, the poison of asps is under their lips, their feet are swift to shed blood, destruction and misery are in their ways. They do nothing but work mischief wherever they come. Why, according to this same spreading, and diffusion of sin, which is here called flesh; so must be that of the spirit too, enthroning itself in the very inwards of the soul, and having its residence there; whilst thence it diffuses its energy and vital influence, through all the parts and powers of the man; and leavens the whole lump. Both sin and holiness are represented to us upon the account of their diffusive nature, by a metaphor of the same kind; by the apostle, 1 Cor. v. 6. and by our Saviour, Mat. 13. 33.

(5.) He must understand it to be a most excellent thing; of a very high and great excellence, which is here called spirit. It is a most pure essence, and noble production, agreeable to its productive cause. How vain a thing is all this material world, if you abstract and sever spirit from it? What a sluggish dull lump were all this mass of earth, and all the matter of the world, without spirit? If you could imagine such a distinct thing as a spirit of nature, and we know there are operations which some call by that name, which in Scripture are simply ascribed to this same Spirit who is here spoken of under

the name of the Spirit. The great Almighty Spirit of God, in the creation of the world, did move upon the waters; and in the continual sustentation, direction and government of the creatures, it hath its agency; Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth, Psal. civ. 30. If we should conceive no such thing as spirit to influence this same material world, what a heap would it soon be? As a house would in time become, only much sooner, which should never have any inhabitant, or any body to reside there; for the influence of an inhabitant is not so much to keep the house up, as this Almighty Spirit is to keep up the frame of nature, and continue things in the course and order, wherein they naturally were. Upon this account, many of the more refined philosophers have made it very much their business, to speak debasingly and diminishingly of man, and to represent him as a despicable thing; that is the mere body or matter separate from spirit; which plainly carries this signification with it, that spirit was, in their account, a most excellent sort and kind of being. This expression, that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit, holds forth this production to be such, that is, of the noblest kind. When the prophet would speak diminishingly and with contempt concerning the Egyptian power, he says, their horses are flesh and not spirit, Isa. 31. 3. They have no spirit in them; an expression merely designed to set forth how little they were to be feared or regarded, and how contemptible they were.

(6.) It is a soul rectifying, or restoring thing. It being a thing of a very high excellence, must needs not only render the spirit of a man into which it is put, a great deal more excellent than it was; but it was withal designed to restore it to its pristine excellence, and make it what it was, or what it ought to be. It is by this work or production in the spirits of men, that souls are said to be restored; Thou restorest my soul, Psal. 23. 3. So far as this work hath taken place in me he hath brought me back and made me to return, where I was and ought to have been. It is therefore the very rectitude of the soul, or setting it right again: Create a right spirit within me, Psal. li. 10.

(7.) It is a divine thing, as we must needs understand it. For it is the birth and production of the divine Spirit, and is immediately from God; and it is his very image; and the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. It is something which is as it were copied out of God himself, and whereof he is at once both the immediate efficient and exemplar. And upon this account it is called, by the apostle, the divine nature. 2 Pet. I. 4.

(8.) It is a thing by the very nature of it, instincted into a dependance upon God; or immediately dependant upon him as to its continual subsistence. There is a natural dependance which is common to all creatures, and essential to them as creatures. All have a kind of instinct drawn from the continual sustaining them, from the great Author of all: but this is a creature which depends knowingly and of choice; and so as to own and avow itself to be a depending creature: I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me, Gal. 2. 20. And therefore there are continual breathings of desire after God: As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. Psal. xlii. 1.

(9.) It is a creature which not only depends on God voluntarily and of choice, but aims at him, and tends to him as an end, and carries the heart and soul of a man to do so. It is by this same inwrought Spirit that the soul is principally rectified and set right towards God, so as to design him only, and to do all for him. Hence this becomes the sense of such a one; "I desire to be nothing, Lord, but for thee. My whole life and being are things of no value with me, but for thy sake. I care not whether I live or die; whether I am in the body or out of the body, is all one to me; for to me to live is Christ; and my great desire is, that Christ may be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. Phil. 1. 20, 21. And I through the law, am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." Gal. 2. 19. As soon as ever he becomes, in the former sense, dead; delivered from the law, and rescued from under the dominion and curse of it, he lives unto God. His life becomes a devoted thing; and the tenour and stream of all his thoughts and designs, and endeavours is altogether and wholly to him.

(10.) It is an active powerful thing: or a creature made for action and contest. It is a Spirit of power. 2 Tim. 1. 7. That which is born of God overcomes the world, 1 John. v. 4. This son of God, this product and begotten Spirit, is born of God. What? Shall not this son of God which is begotten of him, overcome? Nay, in whom it obtains, they are more than conquerors: they conquer over and over; they conquer abundantly and with the greatest advantage imaginable. It is to them who overcome, that the crown and throne are designed at last. They shall have a new name; and the heavenly hidden manna, and sit down with Christ upon his throne, as he overcame, and is set down upon the Father's throne, Rev. 3. 21.

(11.) It is an immortal thing, and which never dies. Spirit is a thing which essentially carries life in it, and therefore can never cease to live. It is an incorruptible seed, and

the seed of God put into the soul. He who is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remains in him, 1 John 3. 6. His seed, of whom he is born. Can that be a mortal thing? It is observable therefore, how the apostle argues concerning those, whom he supposes to have been the subjects of this mighty and blessed operation of the Spirit of God. If by the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body ye shall live; for as many as are led by the Spirit, are the Sons of God, Rom. 8. 14. He takes it for granted they are the begotten sons of God, by the Spirit. And it is as if he had said; What do you think the sons of God shall not live? hath he begotten any mortal sons, or such as can corrupt and die? So those words are commonly, and very probably, understood to signify, Rev. 20. 6. Blessed and holy is he who hath part in the first resurrection; over him the second death shall have no power. I will not assert that to be the sense, but it is not improbable to be so. They who are regenerate, and have got this Spirit of life into them; they have got that in them which will spring up into life everlasting: having their fruit unto holiness their end is eternal life. As our Saviour speaks, John 4. 14. and the apostle Paul, Rom. 6. 22.

You have by these hints some account, what kind of thing this same begotten Spirit is, when it is said, that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. The time doth not allow at present, to go farther in the explicatory part: I would hint this one thing by way of use before we depart, that we take heed of diminishing, or thinking slightly and meanly of this mighty distinguishing work of the Spirit of God. They are awful words, if duly considered, That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. There is nothing to be found in all this world, worthy the name of spirit, but that which is born immediately of the Spirit, and is its offspring. Our Saviour speaks in the other part of the verse manifestly in a way of contempt; That which is born of the flesh is flesh: that is but flesh, which is born of flesh! That is, men considered in their mere naturals only, or in this present corrupted state of nature. We must understand the whole being of man, to be the corrupted subject; and so to be altogether comprehended, under the name of flesh; his very soul and natural spirit itself in opposition to Spirit, in the other part of the verse, as the antithesis plainly shews. Let a man be of never so refined intellectuals, or great accomplishments; let him be never so much a man, and humanity cultivated to the highest pitch and degree; without this same additional superadded Spirit; he is nothing else but a lump of flesh. If this thought did sink into the hearts of men, what despicable and self loathing thoughts would they have of them-

selves, while as yet they can find nothing of this begotten increated Spirit in them; while that Spirit is not yet come into me by which I live to God, and my soul is turned to him, and set on him, framed for him, and made active towards him, and on his behalf; all this while I am as if I were a body and no more, or a mere breathless carcass. For plain it is that to all the actions and comforts of the divine life, a man in his mere naturals, is as to these things, as a carcass is to the actions of a man: that is, a carcass can as well read and discourse, and travel, and trade, as a man in whom this Spirit is not, can love God, take pleasure in him, act in pure devotedness to him, design him as a portion, and have respect to him as such. So that now if men did but allow themselves the liberty of reflection, it could not be but sometime or other this would be their communing with themselves: "Either I have this new superadded Spirit, or I have not: if I have, sure such a thing as I have heard it is, would make some work in my soul, and shew itself; it could not be latent there; I should find some changes and transformation wrought in me. And if I have not, then where am I? In how dismal and forlorn a state! it is for me to go and dwell among graves, for I am as a carcass, but a piece of spiritless flesh, or breathless lump." Oh that right thoughts of our case upon this account, might once obtain, and take place. If this Spirit is not in us, then we are dead creatures; if we have any thing of life in us, it is because the Spirit of the living God hath infused, and increated it. It is of no small concernment if this latter is our case, to observe and view the Spirit of God aright. And if the former is our case, to see to it, and deal truly with our own souls, while any natural breath remains, in order to the regaining that spiritual life, by which we may be capable of breathing spiritually. Methinks one should have a restless mind after it; Oh I have no spirit within me; nothing that moves towards God; no sense of him, or breathings after him. Oh that I were more acquainted with it. It is strange that there should be life, and no such motion; and impossible there should be this begotten spirit, and we should find no change within.

SERMON II.*

WE have proposed in order to the explication of the text, these three things, 1 To consider the product here spoken of, under the name of the Spirit. 2 The productive cause, or the divine parent, to which this birth owes itself; The spirit. 3. The kind of the production expressed here by being born, or begotten. We have already spoken to the first of those, and proceed now to the

II. The productive cause, which is here styled, in an emphatical sense, the Spirit. This name being spoken of the spirit, is commonly observed and known to be taken two ways, either essentially, or personally: essentially, so it signifies the nature of God; the pure perfect spirituality of that blessed Spirit: So it is said, John 4. 24. God is a Spirit. But most frequently it is taken in the other sense, personally; that is, to signify the person known by that name; the third in the Godhead who by eternal spiration proceeds from the Father and Son. That which I at present design is to speak of this blessed Spirit, the parent of this great production, as such; and therefore shall not so much discourse to you concerning the Spirit absolutely considered; as in this relation, or as the author of this work wrought in the spirits of men. What we are to conceive of it, as it is a subsistence in the Godhead; or what its agency and operations may be, between the Father and Son; or what the kind and nature of that eternal Spirit is, and by what way it collectively proceeds from both, we are left very much in the dark, as being things of less concernment to us. But what is of more importance to us, we find more clearly, and expressly spoken of, that is, how we are to con-

* Preached December 5th, 1677. at Cordwainer's Hall.

sider it in relation to the creation. And so we are taught most evidently to look upon it as the great author of all those influences and operations, which are properly attributable to God, or any where have place throughout the whole creation; whether we speak of the old creation or the new; and both within the sphere of nature and grace.

Within the sphere of nature it must be acknowledged the author of universal nature, howsoever diversified, and in whatsoever creatures, and must be conceived to have influenced, and still to influence, all the creatures, both in the works of creation and providence. Both these are manifestly attributed to the Spirit of God in Scripture. It was said in the creation to be upon the waters, (Gen. I. 2.) to be every where infusing its vital influence, through the chaos which was then to be formed and digested, and put into order. By it the world is as it were new created every day; thou sendest forth thy Spirit, and they are created; and renewest the face of the earth, Psal. civ. 30. And by his Spirit the Lord doth garnish the heaven, as well as renew the face of the earth, Job. 26. 13. So that we do not need to seek after another distinct spirit of nature, much less an irrational and unintelligent one, as some fancy; yea, pagan light hath gone so far in some, as to understand it to be a mind, and intelligent spirit which doth every where diffuse formative, and governing influence, through this great creation. And being by its nature immense, it is every where at hand to answer every such purpose which the exigence of the case in order to the creature's renewing, doth require. But our greater and more direct concern is to consider it as the author of all operations, within the sphere of grace, and the new creation. This is it which the text doth manifestly intend, that is, to be the operator in that great work by which men are to be new formed, for that new and other kingdom, which God is raising up to himself in this world, out of the ruins of that kingdom of nature, which he hath, and still holds over all. And we must understand it to be with great propension, and the highest pleasure, that this blessed Spirit hath undertaken, and doth perform this so important work; if we consider it under the name and style of the Spirit of grace, as it is called Heb. 10. 29. It takes itself to be despited when the truth is not received, or when it is rejected, and men revolt from it; which is the great instrument by which this work of the Holy Ghost is to be effected and wrought upon the spirits of men. As you know there can be done to none a greater despite than to cross them in a design, upon which they are intent and unto which they are carried by a strong propension and inclination of mind. Here lies the emphasis and high pitch of aggravation and the malignity of this

wickedness, that the Spirit of all goodness and benignity and love and sweetness is despited by them: They can find nothing else to turn the spite upon, but the Spirit of grace. Consider it under this character, and we must understand this work to be undertaken by it with the greatest propension, and performed with the highest pleasure. Looking down upon this forlorn world, and beholding all things waste, and ruin: nature in the best master-piece of the creation, grown degenerous, depraved, a poisonous and horrid thing; why, pity and compassion has been stirred up to the world, and that immense Spirit hath gone forth full of love and goodness; full of vital influence, being designed to the office of doing a blessed work, here and there, wherever it finds its work to lie; and that the new creation might be made to spring up out of the wastes and desolations of the old. As a Spirit of grace we must understand it very intent upon this work and highly pleased with it.

And as a Spirit of power, we must suppose it to go on in this work with efficacy, and to crown it with most certain and glorious success. It will not be baffled out of its work, or suffer itself to be put besides its office, unto which it hath been designed and appointed, for so happy a purpose. And wherever it is that we find the state of souls bettered, and any thing done to form and prepare meet subjects for God's kingdom; we are most manifestly taught to ascribe all such work to this blessed Spirit. It is his appropriate office to refine the spirits of men to that pitch, as that they may be capable of their own name again; that is to be called spirit, when the whole man before, is called flesh, till this divine work pass upon it.

This will be evident by considering the several parts of this work; and you can instance in none whereunto the Spirit of God is not entitled. Is holy light and knowledge a part? This Spirit is, upon that account, called the Spirit of knowledge, Isa. 11. 2. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation; Eph. 1. 17 This is implied in the following words; The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know the hope of your calling. Is again, faith a part of this work? as certainly it is; for they who believe are said to be, born not of flesh nor of blood, or of the will of man but of God. John 1. 13. Why in reference hereto, it is styled, the Spirit of faith. 2 Cor. 4. 13. We having the same spirit of faith; that is, the same with David who is quoted there; we believe and therefore speak. It is plainly signified to us, that this same Spirit is always employed as a Spirit of faith, and works uniformly from age to age; so that just as it wrought in David at so many hundred years distance, so it wrought in Paul. Is again, love a part of this work in the souls of men? It is styled in Scrip-

ture the Spirit of love. 2 Tim. 1. 7. He hath given us the Spirit of love. That pure and holy love by which the soul unites with God, becomes devoted to him, enjoys solace, and satisfies itself in him. And again, is hope a part of it? Why it is attributed to this same Spirit: christians do abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost, Rom. 15. 13. Again, is joy a part, and principle in this new creation? That is called joy in the holy Ghost, Rom. 14. 17. Is meekness a part? This same Spirit upon that account is called, the Spirit of meekness, Gal. 6. 1. If that is understood to signify the habit of meekness in the soul of a christian; yet that connotes a reference to this Spirit as the author of that gracious frame and disposition, and the name itself might congruously enough be understood of the blessed Spirit itself, as such a work is under the power and dominion of that Spirit, who is herein the Spirit of meekness in those in whom it is wrought. Is the fear of the Lord a part? It is called the Spirit of the fear of the Lord, which rests upon him who is the rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch growing out of his roots. Isa. 11. 1. And it is the same Spirit, and under the same characters, which is given to all who are united to him; and anointed with the same Spirit. If you would have sundry such particulars as have been mentioned together, you have an enumeration somewhat distinct, Gal. 5. 22. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Would you take what is more summary and comprehensive, and contains all such particulars together? Holiness is of such a comprehensive nature: and it is called the Spirit of holiness, Rom. 1. 4. And the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth: that universal rectitude which ever comes to have place in the spirits of any. You have the equivalent of it in another expression; it is called the Spirit of a sound mind. 2 Tim. 1. 7. Which signifies an entire good habit of soul in all kinds and respects; or that renovation of soul by which a man becomes a new man. So we are renewed in the Spirit of the mind, putting off the old man, and putting on the new. Eph. 4. 23, 24. But if you go to the transcendental attributes, as I may call them, of this new creature, you have them still referred to this Spirit. Life is such a one; for that is capable of being spoken of every gracious principle; it is lively faith, and lively hope, &c. Why, this is the Spirit of life, which gives life. 2 Cor. 3. 6. Power is such another; for that is also capable of being spoken of every grace, it may be more or less powerful. There is the power of faith, the strength of love and hope, &c. And it is called the Spirit of power, in reference hereunto, 2 Tim. 1. 7.

And elsewhere, the Spirit of might, Isa. 11. 2. If we go to what is preparatory to this work, or the convictions which must pass upon the spirits of men in order to it, this blessed Spirit is entitled to that as the great author of them. John 16. When the Spirit the comforter is come, he will convince the world of sin, and righteousness, and judgment. When the comforter is come: the word is indifferently capable of being rendered the advocate; or the great pleader, and he who undertakes to manage the cause of Christ and Christianity against the world. He, when he is come, will make work in the spirits and consciences of men; He will make the world understand what they are so unapt to understand, their own sin, my righteousness and the power of that judgment and government, which is to be set up, in order to the saving whoever shall be saved; or this very kingdom, which is spoken of in the preceding verse. If we respect what is consequential, and following upon this work; consolations of renewed souls; they are called, the consolations of the Holy Ghost; and the church's walking in the comforts of the Holy Ghost, were edified. Acts 9. 31. All their pre-assurances of the possessing of the eternal inheritance, are owing to the Spirit, as the earnest of that inheritance. Eph. 1. 14. 2 Cor. 5. 5. And the Spirit of adoption, Rom. 8. 15. If we consider the pregustations and foretastes of heaven and glory, which souls now enjoy sometimes in their way; these are called the first fruits of the Spirit, Rom. 8. 23. If we respect the exercises of the new creature, when once there is an infused principle; or any thing of an habitual frame of a holy mind, comes to obtain in us; these are still constantly attributed to the Spirit. As the mortifying of sin; If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live, Rom. 8. 13. Leading a holy life, or walking in a way or course of holiness, is called walking in the Spirit, and being led by the Spirit. Gal. 5. 16. The life of christians is hereupon a sowing to the Spirit, whence of the Spirit they receive at length, life everlasting, in Gal. 6. 8. Right worship is attributed to the Spirit. Prayer, which is worthy of the name, is praying in the Holy Ghost, Jude 20. and worshipping in general, if it is right, is worshipping in Spirit and truth, John 4. 24. which may be meant, under dominion of God's own Spirit. But more expressly, Phil. 3. 3. We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit. So that look upon what you will relating to the new creature, and every thing of it is attributed to the Spirit, as the productive cause. Consider its parts, its sum, its exercises, its properties; consider what is preparatory to it, or consequently upon it; consider what it

doth, and what it enjoys; and all is resolved into this great principle, the Spirit.

III. We are next to consider the kind of the production, which is signified by a peculiar expression, begetting: for so it is indifferently capable of being rendered, either born or begotten. This is a distinguishing sort of production; there are many ways of production, to which the name of begetting will not square. Our further work must therefore be, to shew you the peculiar import of this expression, and what is designed to be signified by it. It plainly holds forth to us such things as these,

1. It imports the productions to be of a living thing. Begetting is a natural, vital production. All productions are not so: but there is nothing properly said to be begotten, but that which lives. Begetting, it is true, goes as low as to the lowest kind of life; as to vegetives: that is not only *altrix*, and *auctrix*, but *procreatrix*, which propagates its kind; but it never goes lower, and is never carried to things inanimate. They are not said to beget, or be begotten, which are in their kind dead things; it reaches not the meaner sort of natural productions; much less to artificial ones. A man is not said to beget a house, when he builds it; or any thing else which is made by the art of man. This production, inasmuch as it is signified by the name of begetting, signifies it to be a living thing. And therefore we are to know, that whatsoever it is of religion which any one pretends to, if it is a dead religion, and without life, it is an artificial religion; and you know any thing which belongs to us, which doth not partake of life with us, and from us; we can without any inconvenience, or trouble, shake it artificially, as we please, this way, or that. Many a man's religion is a cloak to him, which is no living thing; and a man may alter and change the fashion of it; and put it off, and on, and never put himself to any pain. But if a man's religion is a living thing, and is animated by a life, as it were, common to him and it; why, that must not admit of alterations. We cannot shape our limbs as we please, though we may our cloaths, for they are enlivened by that Spirit of life, which runs through the whole body. They who have a religion made up of dead formalities and duties in which there is no life, no soul; cannot be said to be born of the Spirit, and it is no production of his.

2. It imports the production of a thing of like nature, to its productive cause. There is a likeness of nature between the cause and the effect, and from such a creature begetting, a creature of a like nature doth proceed. Upon this account, though a parent is truly said by way of begetting, to produce a

child: yet he doth not by way of begetting make any other effect, which is not of that kind; as a house, a picture, or suit of cloaths, &c. It is very true indeed, we are not to strain this matter so far as if this were a univocal production which is here intended; which begetting doth not properly signify: Yet neither is it equivocal; when the thing produced is of quite a diverse nature, from the productive cause; but there is an analogy and proportion between the one and the other. There is something in that which is begotten, which doth in nature correspond and answer to that which doth beget, even wherein the one is begotten and the other begets. And what doth that speak? The production here spoken of, is not the production of a man, as a man; but of a saint, as a saint; or of a christian, as such; and therein is an agreement, or correspondency. What is it which makes a saint? That is holiness. Why we find this both in the cause, and in the effect. The Apostle presses the exhortation; Be ye holy, as I am holy, 1 Pet. 1. 16. It is a vain and absurd thing to call God Father, and pretend to be begotten of him: if you are not holy as he is holy; and nothing of his holiness appears in you.

3. In the very business itself of regeneration, passiveness in the subject is manifestly imported: for who can contribute to his own being born; that is, as to the thing itself of being begotten. We are here indeed to consider a production not *simpliciter*, but *secundum quid;* that is, a creature in a creature; or something begotten in that which was begotten before. There is a new work to be done where there was a pre-existing subject; and that a rational and intelligent one. There is much therefore properly to be done, and necessary to be done in order to this work, but there is nothing to be done in it, but only to be born: we are therein truly passive. Faith comes by hearing; that is a previous thing, and that we may do, and can do. We can suppose nothing more subversive of religion, than the contrary: for it is all one to say, The gospel is not at all necessary to regeneration, which is the end; as to say that the hearing of it, and understanding and considering of it, is not necessary. The gospel is neither necessary, nor significant, nor useful to the purpose of conversion and regeneration, otherwise than as the minds and understandings come to be employed about it; and this they do as men; and this way the Spirit, who is as the wind, which bloweth where it listeth, doth, as the season of grace is arbitrarily and freely chosen; come in with that influence, by which men are made saints, and then capable of acting as such.

4. The impossibility of resisting, so as to frustrate or prevent it. Being born signifies such a way of production, as

whereto we cannot oppose ourselves, or any power which should prevent, or promote it. Such a resistance as should hinder God's designed work, or the good pleasure of his will, in this case, does not take place. This is intimated in this form of speech. For this is a production, not of a separate single substance, by itself; but a creature in a creature. It is true indeed that the spirit of a man, as he was constituted, before any such work as this came to obtain, was apt enough to resist; but all that aptitude to resistance shall be overcome, whensoever that influence is put forth, by which this work is done.

And here, there needs a caution too, as well as in reference to the former head. Some may be apt to apprehend; if this work is wrought and done, by such an irresistible power, to which no opposition can be made; what need we trouble ourselves; when God will do such a work, he will do it: it will never be in our power to hinder it, and we need never be afraid, that we shall. To this it may be said, and it ought to be seriously considered; that though there is no possibility of such resistance to that influence by which this work is done, wheresoever it is done, which could have prevented the doing of it; yet there are many previous workings, in order to it, wherein the Spirit of God is frequently resisted; that is, the workings and operations of common grace, which lead and tend to this special work of grace. And here lies the great danger, when in these common precursory works of the Holy Ghost, which have a tendency in them to this work, and by which it is gradually moving on; they may resist and oppose themselves, to a total, utter, eternal miscarriage. The Spirit of God in this work. can never be resisted; but so as that it will certainly overcome and effect its work. But we must know that he is a free Agent; and there is reason to apprehend there is the same reason in chusing the degree of operation, as there is of the subject. It doth not only work where it listeth; but to what degree it listeth of power and efficacy: and when it is working but at the common rate, then it suffers itself many times to be overcome, and yields the victory to the contending sinner. You see what the charge was upon the people of Israel by Stephen, Acts 7. 51. Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ear; ye do always resist the Holy Ghost as your fathers did, so do ye. It is remarkable to this purpose what this blessed man charges that people with; that this was the genius of that people from age to age, from one generation to another. Ye do always resist, &c. The same spirit of enmity and contrariety is still propagated and transmitted from one age to another, your fathers are like their fathers, and their fathers like theirs; and so run on back as far as you will; they were always a people resisting and contending against

the Holy Ghost: as the complaint was against them not long before, Isai. 63. 10. They rebelled and vexed his Spirit, therefore he turned and fought against them, and became their enemy. And that this is the common temper, is most evident, and was so even in the more early ages of the world. My Spirit shall not always strive with man, Gen. 6. 3. That striving implies a resistance. There is great danger of resisting the Spirit of God, when it is in that method and way of operation, wherein it many times yields to the resistance. It is as if he should say to the sinner; "Because thou hast so great a mind to get the day, and deliver thyself from under the power of my grace, get that unhappy victory, and perish by it."

5. It imports the integrity and perfection of the product, and that the thing begotten is an entire thing. There doth not use to be born one simple member, but an entire creature; and there is a concurrence in the constitution of it, of whatsoever belongs to this sort and kind of creature. And though there are some kinds within the sphere of nature of mutilous and maimed persons, imperfect productions; yet we must know, that this doth by a peculiarity belong to this great parent, the Spirit of God in reference to all those productions which are within the sphere of grace; that there are never any imperfect productions there. His work is perfect, which is the character of his work in general; and especially when he is forming a people for himself, as he speaks Deut. 32. 4. He is the rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are judgment. And of those who receive not the distinguishing stamp and impress upon them; it is said, their spot is not the spot of his children. ver. 5. There is nothing in them by which they should be known to be his children. Wheresoever the Spirit of God begets, it begets perfect births; that is, according to the common distinction, and a just and necessary one, speaking of a perfection of parts, not of degrees. A child hath as many parts as a man, though not so strong and large. There is an entire concurrence of every gracious and holy principle in the heart, which goes to the composition of the new creature, wherever we can say, that any one is born of the Spirit. And therefore men who pretend to have passed this birth, and yet it appears most manifestly that it is but a maimed production, as it is in too many instances, with several sorts of persons; they carry that about them, which is a confutation of their own pretences. As suppose the case to be this. Some pretend very highly to faith, but they have no humility, no meekness, no self denial. Why, their pretence carries along with it that which confutes itself; for the Holy Ghost is the author of no such imperfect births. There are some who pretend highly in

point of duty towards God, and think themselves altogether exceptionable, in respect of the frame of their spirits and their performances as to the commands of the first table; but bring them to the second, and there is no impression at all of any thing like the mind and will of God appearing in their hearts and lives. Men will pray, and read, and hear; go from sermon to sermon; take one opportunity after another of attending upon religious exercises; but in the mean time they will cheat and cozen, revile and reproach their neighbours and those they have to do with. How unlike is such a production as this to the Spirit of God, when men are made christians thus by halves!

So on the other hand, there are those who will be very punctual and exact in reference to the duties of the second table, and it may be to an eminency, and very high degree; so strictly just in all their performances, so orderly in the relations wherein they stand; yea some very charitable, and apt to do good to others; but bring them to matters which relate to God, and what they can say of living in communion with God; how their hearts stand towards praying to him, and meditating on him; what inclinations or dispositions they have towards an eternal blessedness: to all these things they are silent and have nothing to say. The matter speaks itself in this case; that which is born spirit of spirit, is certainly born a perfect thing as to all the parts which appertain and belong to this creature: and therefore where there are so remarkable maims, it is too manifest this production is none of that divine production by which a man is said to be born spirit of spirit.

6. It imports the permanency of the thing produced, and that it is a fixed and settled habit in the soul. As to things which are merely fluid and transient, we know no such things to which the name of begetting, can with any propriety be applied; as a book or glass of wine, &c. And therefore it must be very unsuitable to the meaning and design of such expressions as these, to think that only better actions are the product in the work of regeneration; and that a man is hence to be denominated regenerate, because he doth better things than he did before; and there is some kind of reformation and amendment of life. It is true indeed the apostle says, He who doth righteousness is righteous, and is born of God. 1 John 2. 29. But what doth that mean? Not that the doing of righteousness is the *productus terminus* in this birth, but an argument that there is such a thing produced, or enabled and rendered capable of doing righteousness; that is, by being made habitually and internally righteous. But to think that there should be so many great expressions in the word of God concerning

this product; that it should be called a divine nature, the new man, the seed of God, God's own image; and when we come to inquire what this is, that any should run the matter into this; it is an action, a good action or two. What! is the divine nature and image, a few good actions? And they who are wont to conceive so of the matter, commonly take up with actions which are far from being any of the best too; and so bring the matter to a very poor pass at last. Certainly this form of expression doth hold forth to us, a fixed permanent effect, and our habitual frame which remains and abides in the soul of a man, and will be an immortal thing.

7 It imports somewhat relating to matter of privilege, that is, a relation to him who begets, as a child. He who is begotten is related as a child, to him who doth beget; and has consequently a title to his care and providence; as every parent thinks himself bound to make provision for his children. They who are begotten of God, are hence at the first step capable of the denomination of sons, or children. And then you know how the apostle rises with it, (Rom. 8. 17.) If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; that if we suffer with him, we may be also glorified together. They who are begotten, fall under his immediate care, and he takes himself concerned to make provision for them; they are a part of his family, the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. If a man will not take care of his own, and they who are of his own house, he denies the faith, and is worse than an infidel: and it is never to be imagined that God will deal so with his family, or children. We must carry the matter of this begetting then as high as heaven; He hath begotten us again to a lively hope—to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. 1 Pet. 1. 4. We are not only to consider, what is born when such a production as this takes place; but what such a one is born to. He is born an heir, an heir of God, and joint heir with Christ: a vast patrimony it is, which they have a share and part in.

Now take all these things together, and it will appear not a mean or little work, which is intended by this expression, of being born or begotten spirit of spirit. Let us therefore take heed of derogating from this great work, or making little of it, as if it were some small trivial thing. Certainly it is not a slight thing, which finally and eternally distinguisheth between them who shall be saved, and them who perish; and is the discriminating mark between the children of God, and other men; or the new seed and race, raised up by God to himself; and the rest of the apostate world, who are called the seed and children of the devil. There are but these two seeds in the

world; and it cannot be a small thing which doth distinguish them. Therefore take heed of thinking little of this work. And as we should take heed of derogating from it, so we should take equal heed of arrogating too much to ourselves upon the account of it. For what have we contributed to our being actually born or begotten? And take heed of censorious discriminations in your own thoughts concerning persons, or diversely denominated parties of men, pretending to religion. As to say, They who are of such a way, they it is likely are regenerate; but they of such a way, are not regenerate. This is to forget that the Spirit, as the wind bloweth where it listeth, and we know not whence it cometh, nor whither it goes; and is as much as in effect to say: "Lo! here is Christ, and there is Christ!" This very work wrought in the soul is called Christ formed in us; the name being put for the image or likeness. We should take heed of saying, Here he is, or there he is; and know that the kingdom of God (and the kingdom of God in one notion of it, that is, subjectively considered, is not a diverse thing from the frame of holiness, inwrought in the soul) doth not consist in externals, in meats and drinks, but in righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Rom. 14. 17. And in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. Gal. 6. 15. The new creature may be found in the circumcision or in the uncircumcision; and it is no matter of which sort one is of, if the work of the new creature do not obtain, and take place. This is therefore much to be minded, and sought, and valued, even for itself, and upon the account of its own intrinsic necessity and excellence. It is enough to recommend any man to me, that there is a visible impress, so far as that thing can be visible of the new creature upon his soul; for whosoever loves him who begets, loveth him also who is begotten of him. 1 John 5. 1.

SERMON III.*

WE have proposed to consider this truth from these words—That there is a work to be done upon all who shall partake in the kingdom of God, by which they are to be born spirit of spirit.—We have opened the work itself according to the several terms in the text; and have spoke to the effect, or production; that is, to make men spirit, who before were flesh;—the productive cause, the Spirit, and—the kind of the production, which is by begetting.

That, which we have next to speak to, is the *necessity* of this work; that is, the necessity of it unto this end and purpose; namely, the rendering men capable of a place and partnership in God's kingdom. And as the former head we have hitherto been speaking of, does lie in the words of the text, looking upon them in their absolute consideration, so we are led to the latter, by the relative consideration of them, or in the reference they have to the foregoing discourse. For our Saviour having said before, that "except a man be born again of water, and of the Spirit; he cannot see, or enter into the kingdom of God:" he doth in this verse, subjoin a reason why he cannot. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh," and therefore there must be somewhat born of the Spirit which may be suitable thereto. In evincing therefore to you the necessity of such a work to such an end; it will be requisite,

I. To give you some account of that kingdom, for which such a work as this is so necessarily preparatory,

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I will not trouble you with many distinctions about it, only we are necessarily to distinguish it, as we may in the common notion of a kingdom, into a kingdom taken formally and actively; so it signifies the royal state, and governing power of a kingdom. In that since the kingdom of God or Christ, is manifestly understood in the prayer of the thief: "Remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom:" that is, into that dignity and royal state, which I believe thou will shortly be in. But then it is very often, and familiarly taken too objectively, for the bulk and body of the community, or the subjects who are under such a king. So we take ours in common speech; and so is the kingdom of God very often taken, when we read of the increase and growth of it under the metaphorical expressions which represent it to us in the gospel. Kingdom taken in the former sense, doth either signify that which is more strictly formal, and so which is appropriate and communicable to the king himself, in such a kingdom; and not communicable to others with him: that is the sovereign power, by which he doth in common govern his subjects. Or else, there may be somewhat consequential to that which is more strictly formal; and which doth more accidentally belong to the king; and is communicable, and in a secondary sense, capable of being imparted and derived, to many at least, among his subjects; those especially, whom he more particularly favours. And that is such honour and dignity as comes to be reflected upon such and such persons, by their relation to such a king. In that sense a kingdom is said to be given and communicated to the people of God: I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed to me a kingdom. Luke 22. 29. Fear not, little flock; it is the Father's good pleasure to give you a kingdom. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you. There are several things wherein especially, favourite subjects do partake in a kingdom, with him who supremely rules, and holds and exercises the sovereign power. We would consider as belonging to the state of a king, great opulency and riches, splendour and glory, pleasure and delight, beyond what we must suppose common with other men. In this respect the appellation is given; Ye have reigned as kings without us; I would to God you did reign, that we might reign with you, 1 Cor. 4. 8. They were a sort of *tanquam* kings, speaking of that free state and condition wherein they were, and exempted from suffering: they had plentiful enjoyments beyond what the apostle could have. And so in this kingdom of God, all who do partake in it, are in these respects, said to be kings; Unto him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood: and made us kings and priests unto God, and our

Father. Rev. 1. 6. That is, in pursuance of God's design, and according to his purpose and intendment, he hath done his work to his hand, which he appointed him to do, in this kingly part. To enter into the kingdom, and behold and see the kingdom, which are the expressions our Saviour uses in this context, may very well be understood to signify one and the same thing; only that one must according to the manifest import, denote the first introduction into that kingly state; and the other, the continued enjoyment of it; which seeing is frequently expressive of in the Scripture. Nothing is more usual than to signify enjoyment and fruition, by sight, or vision; because that is the noblest of our external senses; and so (an expression being to be used which is borrowed from sense) the most emphatical, and to the present purpose; the blessedness of heaven is hence expressed by seeing; "The Angels behold the face of my Father which is in heaven. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Follow holiness, without which no man shall see God."

But we are a little further to pursue that notion of a kingdom as it is taken in that latter sense, objectively, and as by the name of a kingdom, is signified the governed community, or the body of the people who are under government. The kingdom of God taken in this sense, is either made up of involuntary, or voluntary subjects; either such whom he governs with their own good liking and consent; or such as he governs whether they will or no, and although they never choose to be under his government. As for that kingdom of his, which takes in involuntary, unwilling subjects; they are either such as are so by natural incapacity, or by vicious disinclination. They who are so by natural incapacity, as also unintelligent creatures, who are never capable of choosing God to be their governor and king: and they who are not willing through vicious disinclination; who though they have that nature which was originally capable of intellection, and so consequently of election and choice; yet the pure powers and faculties by which they were capable of it, are now become so depraved, that they disaffect his kingdom, and cannot endure to be under his government. And this kingdom of his, which takes in involuntary subjects, whether intelligent, or unintelligent, doth measure with the universe. It is the kingdom of nature, and no one needs any other qualification to be in that kingdom, but to be in *rerum natura*. If he is an existent creature, he is in that kingdom without any more to do; but that is not the kingdom here meant.

There is therefore another kingdom which comprehends and takes in only a willing people, made "willing in the day of his

power;" who with choice and consent of their own hearts, subject themselves to him, to whom it is a pleasant thought (as often as it comes into their minds) that the Lord reigns. They triumph in it, and please themselves and glory in it, and pay a joyful homage to him, as the supreme and eternal King. It is into this kingdom that none can enter, but they who are born spirit of spirit. And this kingdom also is to be considered in a twofold state; either in its inchoate, or consummate state. Inchoate is that which we commonly call the kingdom of grace; and consummate the kingdom of glory. Now to be born spirit of spirit, is necessary to any one's having a place in this kingdom, considered either way, or in either state. The inchoate kingdom, you know, for a long time, lay principally among the people of the Jews and they were so apprehensive of their privilege and condition upon that account, and did so highly value it, that it was even a principle among them, that none could come into that kingdom, without being in a sort new born; as some have taken notice who have been well acquainted with their antiquities and usages. And therefore they whoever came to be proselyted to their religion, and who were not native Jews; if they arrived to that degree of proselytism, which made them more complete proselytes, that is, were proselytes of justice; when they came to be initiated, solemnly renounced their earthly relations, all their former kindred and acquaintance, so far that they should not have any power over them to detract or draw them back from the religion in which they were engaged. And so they were looked upon as men *recens nati;* as if they had then newly come into the world, and had a new sort of relations to which they were strangers before. And these proselytes were also hereupon solemnly admitted, through the use of the ceremony of washing in water; to which the words of our Saviour in the foregoing verse, seem to have a manifest reference: "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Upon this account he blames Nicodemus for his great ignorance, who was a master among the Jews. Not that we are to suppose that he thought him ignorant, that there was such a usage among them; but that he no more understood the reason and meaning of their common practice, and should make himself so great a stranger, to that which was the true import of such a ceremony. And therefore our Saviour says, "Except a man is born of water, and of the Spirit;" not therein laying the great stress, upon being born of water; for that is a thing he admits and takes for granted: and he implies in this expression his intendment to settle and establish that as an ordinance transferred from the Jewish to the Chris-

tian church, and to continue there; but that upon which he lays the weight, and where the emphasis lies, is the latter expression; "Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit." As if he had said; "You are apt to lay a great stress upon that ceremony you use of baptizing with water, when any persons are initiated into the church of God; and though that is not nothing, yet you must know, if there is not a being born and baptized of the Spirit, as well as of water; it signifies nothing to your having a place in the kingdom of God, or to any one's else" This is a usual thing in Scripture to join two matters together, in one tenour and form of speech, where the stress is mainly laid upon the latter, and sometimes only upon it. Rom. 6. 17. God be thanked that you were the servants of sin; but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you. What are thanks given to God for? These are both joined together in the same form of speech: sure he never intended to give thanks for their having been the servants of sin. But the weight and emphasis is to be all carried to that which follows; "But you have obeyed the form of doctrine which was delivered to you." So here, "Except a man is born of water, and of the Spirit." As though he had said, I admit of the fitness and requisiteness that persons should be baptized with water; for that is intimated here, that it shall obtain as a constant usage in the very kingdom of God; but except unto that being born or baptized of water, there is the superaddition of being born of the Spirit, which that of water was but a signal of, no one is any way qualified for the kingdom of God; and cannot have any entrance into it, according to the inchoate, or consummate state of it.

II. And now to evince the necessity of it, it will be only needful to consider,

1. It would be most unsuitable to the Supreme Ruler over this kingdom, that any should come into it who are not new born. For we are to consider, that this is not the kingdom of nature, as was said, but a kingdom founded, not in nature, but in choice. It is true it were no incongruity, or reflection upon the great and glorious King of this kingdom, if it were only that constitution, and there were nothing requisite to give one a place in it, but to be in being; it would be no dishonour, I say, to him to have sinners, and devils too, in his kingdom, if that were all: but considering that this is a kingdom of select persons. and that he makes choice between some and others, and by which he distinguishes some from others; it were a most unreasonable thing in this case to suppose, that he should take in promiscuously persons of so vastly different tempers and dispositions, as they who are born only of the flesh,

and they who are born of the Spirit; or that when he goes to make a distinction, he should make a distinction without a difference, and should take just such as he leaves, and leave just such as he takes; that were most unworthy of the divine wisdom, and the holiness or purity of his nature. This being a kingdom of chosen ones, it is to be supposed, that he should make them whom he chooses, suitable to himself. Therefore it is most strictly insisted upon, and highly charged upon them who come to stand visibly related to this kingdom, that they approve themselves suitably to it. Observe the expression of the apostle, 1 Thes. 2. 12. You know how I exhorted you, and how I comforted you, and how I charged you, that you should walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory. The great stress is laid upon a suitable becoming deportment, such as may not be reflecting and reproachful to the blessed and glorious God, who had called them to his kingdom and glory. It was therefore upon this account necessary, inasmuch as they must be rendered suitable to their king, who come into this kingdom; that the Almighty Spirit should be employed, go forth with power, and diffuse its mighty influence, and form and prepare men to be of this kingdom. And that was not to be done but by this begetting them spirit of spirit, and that they who come into this kingdom, might be at once both subjects and sons; for the kingdom is spoken of both under the notion of a kingdom and of a family; that family which is on earth, named from our Lord Jesus Christ. Eph. 3. 15. It is not suitableness enough in this case, that it is a kingdom of rational and intelligent creatures: that would indeed give a natural suitableness; God is the God of the spirits of all flesh. Num. 16. 22. But it is most manifest here that the spirit in the latter expression, is not taken in a natural sense, any more than flesh, in the foregoing part of the verse. Our Saviour doth manifestly speak of flesh there contemptibly, and seems to cast an ignominy upon it; whereas mere natural flesh is a very innocent, harmless thing. And it is no more spirit that is taken in a natural sense; but as by the flesh, is meant corruption and sinfulness, so by spirit is meant holiness, principally and chiefly; and it is therein that they must be suitable to him, who shall see God. You must be a holy nation, a holy people; so he speaks concerning the people of the Jews, whose constitution was as it were a type and model of the kingdom of God, which was afterwards to obtain in the world in a greater lustre and glory, and to be perfected at length into an eternal kingdom, Ye shall be to me a holy people. Exod. 19. 6. So they became suitable to him as a peculiar treasure above all nations: they were a peculiar people to him in this very res-

pect, which certainly none can be who are not born spirit of spirit.

2. It were unsuitable that others should be of this kingdom, to the design and end of its constitution and appointment. We have that expressed in 1 Pet. 2. 9. a place taken from the forementioned, 19th of Exodus, Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people: and they are called for this end and purpose; "to shew forth the praises of him who hath called you from darkness to his marvellous light." This then is a constitution set up and formed on purpose, to be to the praise and glory of God. When our Lord has finished the work of his mediatorial kingdom, and put it out of its imperfect and growing state, into that of consummation, wherein it is to continue and endure always; he will then come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them who believe, 2 Thes. 1. 10. But alas! what were there admirable or glorious in this matter, if men were to be gathered as it were, by a casual hand, into one body and community without making any discrimination? It were then a work which had nothing glorious in it; even when this kingdom is rising to its complete state, and perfect maturity to have persons found there, who were never born into it, or had a temper of mind agreeable to it. It might be said in that case, the end was lost, and the design miscarried. And the greater stress is to be laid upon this, for this reason, that this is a second constitution, to have a pure and holy kingdom in this world. The kingdom of nature was pure at first; there was nothing of iniquity in it; but there was an apostacy and revolt in it; a great part made a defection; the whole race of men. Now this is a design of retrieving the loss, so far as it is possible to be retrieved; that is, that those angels who fell not should be confirmed; and among men, who all fell, many should be restored: so that it was manifestly to be seen, that the design was, as if God had said, "I will have a kingdom which shall hold pure, and holy, and in which there shall be no more mutiny or tumult, no discord and disorder, and nothing of revolt or rebellion shall be known any more." This being the case, it was plainly his design to have such a constitution as this, for his own eternal praise, and wherein he might be manifest, and his name continue everlastingly glorious. He now forms a people for himself on purpose to be the eternal monuments of his praise. The exigency of the end aimed at in setting up this kingdom, did challenge so much, that it be a kingdom, of them who are born to God, and have a temper suitable to the state they are to come into. Wherefore do we think God did constitute a second kingdom, but

that he would be sure to have all things right and well there, by that time he had brought things to their final result and issue? We may be confident he will make sure work now, and have nothing in this kingdom, but what shall agree with the design and purpose of it, and be homogeneous to it, and all of a piece. And to suppose he should have such a design as this, and suffer himself to be foiled and baffled in it, is a most unreasonable and monstrous supposition.

3. It would be altogether unsuitable to the laws and offices of this kingdom, whether in the present or future state of it. God is to be taken for their God, which is the first and most fundamental of all his laws: "Thou shalt have no other God before me." This is indeed the swearing allegiance to this great King upon their entrance into this kingdom. Who can ever do this who is not born to it? The carnal mind is enmity against God; (cannot endure his government:) for it is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be. Rom. 8. 7. It is never possible any can join themselves to God as their God, without having their minds spiritualized and refined into such a temper as can agree to him. There will be perpetual tumultuations and regrets against his authority and laws, till this transforming work hath passed upon them. And then afterwards the whole course of such persons walk and deportment, must be a continued course of subjection and obedience. They must bear themselves toward God as their chosen God, and live entirely to him. And sure there needs another spirit than what is natural to man: for they are in all their after course to walk in the Spirit, to worship in the Spirit, to pray in the Spirit, to do every thing they do, in the Spirit. How necessary is it, upon this account, to be born spirit of spirit? It is, and must be the eternal work of those who are of this kingdom, to love, and obey, and praise everlastingly. What is a carnal heart to such employment? The laws of this kingdom require that these be the perpetual exercises of those who come into this kingdom. Carnality, should we suppose such a thing in this kingdom, must needs carry with it that enmity, which stands in direct opposition to love; that rebellion, which stands in opposition to obedience; that stupidity, which stands in opposition to praise. The greatness and excellencies which the subjects of this kingdom are eternally to praise, it were altogether impossible, a carnal mind, should look upon, without regretting; that he is so great, to whom they are so little.

4. It were most unsuitable to the grants and privileges of this kingdom. What is to be enjoyed in that kingdom, can never be enjoyed but upon this supposition, that they are born

of the Spirit. Think of the present privileges which are granted to the subjects of this kingdom;

(1.) They are brought into a state of liberty. He who is king in the kingdom, is not a king over slaves, but a free people; and indeed their freedom consists in this, that they are so willingly subject. A heathen could say so much, speaking in reference to a kingdom which God governs, according to his apprehensions of it: *In regno nati sumus: Deo servire, regnare est.* We are born in a kingdom, or into a kingdom, so it had been fuller to this purpose. There are none come into this kingdom, without being born into it, or attempered and suited to it. And he supposes the highest privilege of being in this kingdom is, in being subservient to God: "to serve God," says he; "that is to reign." We are kings in this kingdom, rather than subjects, in being subject to him. The apostle James has a magnificent expression, but most just, and not strained; the law which we are required to obey, he calls the royal law of liberty, chap. 1. 25. And the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, does make us free from the law of sin and death, Rom. 8. 2. The felicity and duty of the subjects in this kingdom herein meet in one and the same point: for whereas it is their duty not to serve sin; it is their privilege to be exempt from that vile servitude; and they themselves are brought to resent it as such when once the law of the Spirit of life has made them free. Oh! what an ease is it to have the yoke thrown off and to find a man's spirits so disentangled, as to be able to say; "I am not restrained, as I have sometimes been, from the love and communion of the blessed God; I am not depressed and borne down towards the earth as heretofore, when I should ascend and get up in lively affection to heaven. It is a most pleasant thing to feel liberty, and find one's self set free." This Spirit by which persons are thus born, makes them free as soon as they are born: Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty; that is, that Spirit which refines and transforms from glory unto glory: as the connexion lies, 2 Cor. 3. 17, 18. How inconsistent therefore must it needs be with those who remain still in the flesh, for such a one loves the bondage which it is a privilege to be freed from; and takes pleasure in his chains, and is proud of them. The case is with him as with that servant concerning whom the supposition is made in the law of Moses; that he should so love his master, as when the time of relaxation came, he would not go free. The gospel of Christ is the ministration of the Spirit, by which souls are begotten unto God; and whensoever any are by it made sons, they are made free. Therefore we read of this liberty as appropriate to the sons of God; for we are not to sup-

pose, that God's own sons should be slaves. But the bondage of slaves is preferred by carnal hearts, to the liberty of sons; and it will be always so till they become sons; and they will never be sons, till they are born again, and till it can be said of them, there is something produced in them which is spirit born of the Spirit.

(2.) Tranquillity is a great privilege belonging to this kingdom. One who is not thus born of the Spirit hath no seed or principle of peace in himself. To be spiritually minded is life and peace, and this kingdom is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." But they who are still in the flesh, and not born of the Spirit, have that still in their temper and constitution, which is inconsistent with peace; and which, if we should suppose commonly to obtain in that kingdom, would as much shatter and discompose things there, as we find peace is from time to time disturbed in this lower world. What is it which hath made this world so troublesome a region, but only the carnality of it? What is it but the lust of men, which occasions the wars and tumults and commotions, which fill the world with noise and blood from age to age? It would even be so above too, if you should suppose that persons should be generally brought thither, who were not born spirit of spirit.

(3.) Communion with God is the great privilege of the subjects of this kingdom; in some degree in this present state, and perfectly in the perfect state of that kingdom. But do we think that one who is not born spirit of spirit, will ever care to converse with God eternally and always? Alas! how little do they care for it now! How little do they love the divine presence! How wearisome a thing is an hour's attendance upon God, in a duty, to a carnal heart! How would such a one behave himself, to be eternally in that presence, unto which he is so averse! Would it be a heaven to him? Indeed there is nothing which hath made hell any where but sin; and if it were possible that sin could get into heaven, it would create a hell there too.

5. It would be most unsuitable to the community, and all the fellow subjects, if any should come into that kingdom, who were not thus born. It was evidently the design to have them all of a piece, who should have place together, in this kingdom. When that work was designed to be set on foot which was preparatory and fundamental to the perfect and glorious state of this kingdom, it was thought fit that he who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified, should be all of one: (Heb. 2. 11.) that is, all reduced to conformity to one and the same original. He himself who is the Mediator, is the holy and just One; these are the characters by which we find him discrimi-

nately mentioned; and all who are to be gathered to him, must all be one with him in this thing, and he must be the common Sanctifier of them all; that is, by the Spirit by which they are thus begotten and born; that so they may agree and be suitable to him. And being so, it is manifest, there must be the same ground and medium of common agreement among all, who should be united to him, if they must all be made to agree to him who is holy, it cannot be but they must all agree to one another, being holy and sanctified ones. Heaven is called the "inheritance of them who are sanctified;" and certainly the communion which they are there to have with one another, is to be in the highest and perfect sense, the communion of saints. And it being requisite that there should be an agreement and oneness among all the subjects of this kingdom, this agreement was not to be brought about, considering this kingdom must consist of persons who were unlike, but by reducing them who were fallen from that perfection which originally belonged to their natures, to a conformity to the rest. Therefore you find this said concerning those who are to be adjoined and brought into it, that they thereby actually come unto the general assembly, an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and so constitute and make up the church of the first-born, Heb. 12. 22, 23. You must note that first-born here is of the plural number, and so it signifies a church consisting of first-born ones, and must needs have reference to this same birth here spoken of in the text. It was not otherwise possible, that there should be an agreement or conformity when there was once an unlikeness before, but by reducing some to the rest; they who were fallen and lapsed from their original excellence, to a conformity to them who stood. And therefore those angels who stood, remain as a standard and pattern, to which all who are afterward to be adjoined to this kingdom, must be made conformable. As soon as they are got into the account of first-born ones, or are the first-fruits of his creatures, (Jam. 1. 18.) the flower and most excellent and noble part of his creation; they are said to be come to them. The church made up of such, in conjunction with those glorious spirits, the angels who stood, comes to be a uniform church and kingdom. But if they should not be so conformed, it would be prejudicial both to the order and felicity of this kingdom. How both uncomely and uncomfortable a thing, if there should not be this conformity! How uncomely would it be, that there should be some in this kingdom, rejoicing in the excellency and glory of their eternal King; and some secretly envying him, and wishing they could tell how to unking him! How indecorous, when the gene-

rality are engaged in gladsome triumphant songs of praise; for some to lower and hang the head, and dislike the very thing for which others do give thanks! And how inconsistent would it be with the felicity of the subjects of that kingdom, that there should be such jars and discord among them? Certainly it must be, and could not but be a torture and torment to them; and no doubt every thing of that kind must be excluded heaven, the perfect state of that kingdom. If there should be any one found there, who should have this for his known sense; that he cannot love God, or like his government; he cannot be pleased that he is Lord and King, it could not but be a torture unto the rest. When the kingdom is resigned by the Mediator, into the Father's hand, (1 Cor. 15. 24.) and he is to be all in all; filling every soul with his fulness; all desires and wills satiating and satisfying themselves in him, in the midst of all these pleasures, it could not but be a tormenting thing, that there should be any who can take no felicity in him; who dislike his person, and wish him off the throne; who are offended at the purity of that state, and at that, wherein all the rest do place their common felicity. It would be very uncomely and uncomfortable to have any dissensions in that kingdom; and therefore it can never be admitted, and is apparently necessary, that whoever comes into it, enter by this new birth.

6. It would be unsuitable to the course and way of government in this kingdom, whether you look upon it in its present, or future or perfect state. Consider the way of government in this present state. Why here God governs in a way somewhat suitable to the methods of government by men; that is by laws and public edicts, with threats and promises inserted into them; that men may know what they are to do, and what not; and what they are to expect by way of reward if they do well, and what by way of punishment, if they do amiss. This course of government is suited to the reasonable nature of man, and does well as it is managed by some men over others; because they who are to be the governed part, do sensibly perceive how much it is in the power of the governing part, either to do them good or hurt, according as they obey or rebel. So that men's senses are in this case their instructors, of how great concernment it is to conform themselves to the laws; and how dangerous a thing to attempt the violation of them. But consider how these same methods applied to men for their government, by an invisible Ruler, can signify in this case; or what their success commonly is. There are as plain proposals of the law of God to men, as any can be by earthly rulers. It is impossible that human laws can be made plainer, than the divine laws are,

in many, and those the most important, cases. The great God promises infinitely greater things than any mortal can promise; and threatens greater things, than they can assume to themselves to do. But what do all these things signify, where men remain still in the flesh? His laws are plain, and his promises very assured, and his threatenings awful and monitory, to them who are once born of the Spirit, and have got somewhat of sense and life about them, and can perceive things which are above the common allay: but for them who yet remain strangers to this birth, and upon whom the Spirit of the living God hath done no such refining work it is plain that such men's hearts take no impressions from the plainest discoveries of his will. When they are warned of the danger of a continued course of sin; they who warn them are like them who mock: and whatsoever they represent from the divine promises of the blessed state of holy and sincere and obedient souls, is all but like a tale which is told. These methods of government, in the present constitution of this kingdom, will not suit those who are not born spirit of spirit, and till that Spirit come forth with that power, and in that operation, by which the souls of men are begotten to spiritual life. In that work itself, and by that work, the divine precepts and promises, and threatenings, come to be successful and effectually applied; but never else, no more than the most express human laws, with the addition of the severest penalties, or promises of the highest rewards, would signify to a multitude of dead men.

And then for the way of government in the future state of this kingdom, and when it arrives to its perfect state; there we must suppose, the way of government should be, by sweet and secret intimations, and internal irradiations upon receptive minds and hearts; such elapses by which hidden sense is conveyed, even in a moment, so as that all the subjects of that kingdom are to obey, as it were, any wink, or nod, or glance of the eye; I mean any such intimations which can as secretly convey the sense of the great Ruler, as they do commonly among us. But how manifest is it that there must be a great refinedness of mind and heart, to receive those gentle touches by which spirits are in a moment to be swayed this way or that. One who is yet a composition of flesh and not born of the Spirit, how uncapable is he of these kind impressions; these touches which are to come by so gentle a hand; these so insinuating ways, by which God is to slide into the very spirits of these blessed souls, and prompt them this way or that as he pleases!

7. It were most unsuitable to the unchangeableness and perpetuity of this kingdom, that any should be admitted into it, who are not born into it, or made spiritual as the constitution of it is. We ought in all reason to think, that such a state of things as is designed for perpetuity, and never to be changed, must be most unexceptionably perfect. It were a dismal thought that this kingdom should be at once both eternal, and imperfect: for then if it were imperfect it must be imperfect always; and whatsoever were amiss in this constitution of it, would never be repaired, or altered. This kingdom, though it is in its inchoate estate, yet imperfect, that inchoate state is but its temporary state, which will soon be over: but then there must be even in the very entrance into it, an entrance the right way, otherwise the case will be like an error in the first concoction, which is never cured in the second; that is, it must be by being born spirit of spirit. When any one comes into it, he comes into a kingdom which is to be everlasting; and so whatever there should be of irregularity and imperfection in admitting him into this kingdom, it would be an unalterable thing. Substantially this kingdom can never be altered: grace and glory do not substantially differ. That holiness, which the saints carry the name of such from, while they are here on earth, is not another or a diverse thing, from what must be their eternal character above; it will be of the same kind, only much more perfect. That knowledge of God, and satisfaction in God which is to be enjoyed hereafter, is of the same kind and nature, with what in a more inferior degree, the saints partake of here; and in that lower degree they must be attempered and suited in their very constitution: otherwise there would be a substantial difference, between one member of this kingdom and another; and which were never to be altered, but must last always; because the difference which is to be made between the present and future state of this kingdom, is not substantial, but gradual only. And therefore the apostle argues with so much severity, (Heb. 12.) when he had been speaking of that which is most constituent of this kingdom, "an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect," all making up together one "church of the first-born written in heaven; We having," says he, "received a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire." You have now the frame and model of this kingdom brought among you, which is never to be shaken; you are to account therefore that God will make thorough work in his setting up this kingdom; that there shall be no flaws or defects to be found, which shall be uncapable of remedy and

cure afterwards. He never intends to take this frame of things asunder any more, but that it shall last for ever; and therefore expect him to be a consuming fire about this work; he is not to be dallied with now he hath such a work as this in his hands; therefore look that you carry it acceptably to him, with reverence and godly fear. He will shew himself to be a consuming fire in the managing the work of his kingdom, and the setting and framing that constitution and state of things which he resolved never should be shaken, but should last always. And the very reason of the thing itself doth require that it should be so: for whatever a man designs for a long continuance, he would be most accurately curious about. That which he intends only for a day, he would be little solicitous how it were composed and framed; whether there were such curiosity and similitude of parts, yea or no; but that which he intends to be a lasting and permanent thing, that he would have to be very exact at first. A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand. Do we think that when the blessed God designed a perpetual and unshaken kingdom, he would take that into the constitution of it, by which it would certainly come to be divided against itself; and be disagreeing to itself, as the image or representation of Nebuchadnezzar, which was part brass, part iron, and part clay? Surely this kingdom must be another kind of constitution, and made better to agree with itself, inasmuch as it is designed to be unchangeable and everlasting.

Thus then you have the second thing demonstrated; the necessity of being born of the Spirit in order to the having place in the kingdom of God. It lies in our way here to reflect, that since there are so many full, clear, cogent, and convictive reasons of this truth, that yet there should be so great unaptness and slowness in the spirits of men, to receive so vast a truth as this. Is it not an amazing thing, that whereas truths of another import, as soon as they appear to be such, are presently received, and without any more ado: and if they are understood to concern us, they are commonly received with suitable affections and impressions upon men's minds? If you should tell a man there is an opportunity of an advantageous bargain; if he once comes to believe it to be true, he not only assents to it, but receives it with correspondent impressions on his will, resolutions, and affections; it influences his practice, and he goes and does accordingly. It is a thing most amazing, when we consider how express the affirmation is, and how plain and clear the reasons are; and that if once it be acknowledged a truth, it cannot but be acknowledged a most important truth; that yet we so common-

ly hear of such matters, just as we hear a tale which is told, and as if it were all one to us, whether it were true or false. What would we think necessary to beget an unwavering firm persuasion in our hearts, that such a thing is true? Why certainly the concurrence of testimony and plain reason together, carry as much as our hearts can wish in order to the clearing of whatsoever truth. Here is the express word of the Lord of this kingdom; for it is the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as well as the kingdom of God; now you will look upon it as the greatest vanity and madness imaginable for any to promise himself an interest and share in the blessedness of that kingdom, against the express word of the Lord of it. Pray, by what right should you come into it, if the Lord and King will not admit you? Or by what power? Where is your right if he deny your right? Where is your power to evade or oppose, if he resist and withstand you? If there were no more in the business, this were enough, he hath spoken it, and ratified it by the seal of his own Amen. Verily, verily I say unto you: I do assever it to you; I assert it to you with all the peremptoriness imaginable. What should become of that man's soul, or what can we think of his persuasion, who is persuaded against the real word of the Lord of this kingdom, that he shall have place in it? The reason of the thing is so convictive and manifest, that nothing can be more. You may as well think of making a composition of light and darkness, fire and water, of the most inconsistent things; as to bring flesh and spirit together into the composition of this kingdom.

SERMON IV.*

THE truth we have in hand is this;—That there is a work to be done upon all who partake in the kingdom of God, by which they are to be born spirit of spirit.—We have spoken to this doctrinally at large;—the *Use* of it is now before us. And that which I have first to take notice of, as a reflection which cannot but be of very great and common use, is, that since this is so plain and evident a truth, it is exceeding strange that it should not more commonly and visibly obtain in the belief of those who profess themselves christians. So important a truth believed, could not but infer that, that belief would be visible in the practice; and so evident a truth, one would think, men should not stick to believe. Wherefore there are these two heads, I think might be worth our while to discourse to you —To let you see that it is but too visible this truth is not believed by the generality of professed christians and—to shew the unreasonableness of men's disbelief in reference thereunto.

I. I am to shew that this truth is not believed by the generality of those who call themselves christians. And that I may speak more clearly and distinctly, it will be requisite,—to tell you what I mean by their not believing this truth; and then—shew you that men do not believe it.

1. What is intended by this charge upon the generality of persons professing Christianity? Here it will be necessary to

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say something to you,—concerning the object, or truth, which is not believed; and—something concerning the nature of that belief which, we complain, is wanting in reference thereunto.

(1.) Concerning the object, it is requisite you understand that we mean this truth taken entirely and so as to comprehend together, the several things which are contained in it. As for instance,—That there is a change necessary to be wrought in the spirits of men.—that this change must be so great and entire upon their spirits as to amount to another birth, or being born of the Spirit—that God hath such a work and design in hand, as the constitution of a new kingdom of obedient and happy subjects; such as shall willingly obey, and gladly and joyfully partake and communicate with him in the glory and blessedness of this kingdom, and—that there is no other way of entrance into this kingdom but by being so born and connaturalized thereto. All these things are evidently contained in this doctrine. Now it is constantly acknowledged, when you put some one or other of these things, single to a person, who, it may be, hath never yet admitted a serious thought of it; it is likely he will say, "Yes this is true." But it doth manifestly appear, that he hath never digested the system and frame of such truths, as they lie together, and do amount to this sum. And indeed that is one great fault in the common faith of persons professing Christianity, that it is a partial faith: they believe this and that particular truth, they will tell you, taken asunder from the rest, but consider such and such truths as they are a part in the general system of Christian truths; and so it is most apparent, that they are not received and taken in. And

(2.) Suppose any have never so distinct thoughts and apprehensions of the truths of the gospel; those in particular which this truth sums up; yet the faith of most who profess the Christian name, it is plain is quite another thing, in the nature of it, than what really and truly, we ought to reckon, the belief of the Christian doctrine. I do not intend, when I say, these things are not believed, that men professing Christianity are arrived to an explicit disbelief, or that they reckon themselves unbelievers, or profess infidelity in this matter; or that there is no such thing as a real assent unto such truths as this. But there is not that assent which according to the strictness of the Scripture notion, we ought to put the name of belief upon; that is, they do not take it upon the authority of the great God, as a thing revealed from heaven to them, that it is necessary they undergo such a transforming change, in their own spirits, in order to their having place in this kingdom, this is not received on the authority of God, and so as accordingly to influence their hearts and practice. Which if it doth not do,

it doth nothing; and which if it be not apt to do, it is not that faith, which the Scripture intends.

2. This then is that, which we are to make out, from several considerations. As,

(1.) That the Scripture doth commonly attribute, or gives intimation by which we are taught, to attribute the inefficacy of the gospel doctrine, to men's disbelief of it, or their not believing. As that passage of the apostle, wherein he quotes the prophet Isaiah, Rom. 10. 16. They have not all obeyed the gospel, for Esaias saith, Who hath believed our report? They have not all obeyed; and why? Because Isaiah saith, they have not believed. The things which the gospel requires as matter of duty, by the precepts of it, would be comported with, and obeyed, if the truth of them were believed. They are not believed, and how is that demonstrated? Why they are not obeyed. So we are told of the scoffers who would be in the last days; and there is nothing in the days in which we live, more scoffed at, than the Spirit, and this work of the Spirit upon the souls of men; who would walk after their own lusts, saying, Where is the promise of his coming? 2. Pet. 3. 4. Because they do not believe the great things contained in the gospel, therefore they scoff, and therefore they indulge themselves in all ungodliness. We are told, that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one who believes, Rom. 1. 16. Which plainly intimates, that it signifies nothing with them who believe not. With them who believe it is a mighty powerful thing; but with them who believe it not, it effects nothing: there it is weak and impotent. So again we are told by the apostle, 1 Thes. 2. 13. That these Thessalonians when he first came among them, received the word, not as the word of man, but as the word of God, which worketh effectually in them who believe. It hath a most effectual work, where it is believed; and wheresoever therefore it is ineffectual, and there are no suitable impressions, to be found upon men's spirits, there it is manifest, it is not believed: and 2 Thes. 2. 13. We are bound to give thanks to God always for you brethren; for God hath chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth. Which plainly implies, that the truth wherever it is believed, is accompanied with the sanctifying impressions and influences of the Spirit; and it cannot be understood to be believed, where it is not so. And

(2.) Consider further, that the nature of the thing itself is such, and so nearly and directly concerns, and tends to influence the practice, that it is not possible it can be truly believed, if it is not believed practically. We are to consider a vast difference between such kind of assents, which are conversant

about truths, all the design whereof is compassed and attained, as soon as we have spoken them; and those which have a further design; that is, to guide and govern a man's practice, this way or that. Sure it is a far other kind of assent that I am to give, for example, to this truth; that such a thing is poison and would destroy my life; such a thing is useful food, and would preserve my life, than if I give to this, that the sun is so many hundred times bigger than the earth. The reason is, that that doth no way concern my practice, and it is no matter how superficial an assent I give it; but the other are things which concern my practice, and if I do not believe them suitably, and with a practical belief, I might as soon eat the poison as the food. It is incompatible with the nature of these things, that they should be, or can be believed truly, if they are not believed practically; and so as to influence the heart, and direct the course, so far as that I never satisfy myself with knowing, that men are to be born spirit of spirit; but drive at this, to be myself so born. Otherwise it is the most manifest thing in all the world, that I turn this great important truth, which most nearly concerns me, to a thing of mere impertinency to myself. Again,

(3.) It is not consistent with the nature of a man, thoroughly to believe a thing to be true, and yet altogether to be unconcerned about it; supposing the thing in its own nature such as does nearly touch some grand concernment one way or other. There are two things I would remark to you concerning the nature of man; the one is, that it is capable of having some prospect of what is future: it is not confined to only present things, as it is with the brutal nature. The other is, that it is incapable of being indifferent about happiness and misery. The nature of man is capable of having a prospect of futurity, or somewhat beyond the present time. His rational nature doth in this differ, from a brute creature, that whereas that is confined only to the present, and can have no prospect of what is future; men, as their own experience may tell them, have a prospect of what is future, and may befal them to-morrow, or the next day, or what may be a year hence, and what they are then to do. They have a foresight of what may be an advantage, or disadvantage to them in future time. But then it is uncapable of being indifferent whether things should be well or ill with them, supposing they do indeed believe what they have some prospect of. Suppose you hear such a one intends to kill you to-morrow, and have your blood; it is inconsistent with the nature of a man to be so far unconcerned, as altogether to be indifferent, whether his life be destroyed to-morrow or no. But according as he believes or disbelieves the report, so he

will be concerned or unconcerned about it. Nothing can be more evident. Wherefore it must necessarily also be, that according as men believe or disbelieve what hath that aspect upon their future eternal states, either that upon such terms, they shall have place in the kingdom of God, or be excluded and shut out for ever; it is altogether impossible, if men do really believe what is said to them concerning these things, that they should be so indifferent, whether they be happy or miserable throughout a vast and immense eternity, as to have no care or concern about the matter. I add

(4.) That the common unconcernedness about such things, is not to be resolved into any thing else, but their unbelief. I shall here more distinctly labour to evince to you these two things,—that men are very generally unconcerned about those things which this truth hath relation to; their spiritual and eternal states, and—that this their unconcernedness is otherwise unaccountable.

[1.] That they are unconcerned is too apparent from sundry considerations: As

First. That they are so little inquisitive, whether this great transforming change, hath passed upon their spirits yea or no. I understand there is a great necessity of being born spirit of spirit: What would more naturally ensue, if this were believed, than to say, Am I so born? Or what is it to be so born? Do I find any specimen or discovery of such a work wrought in myself? While there are so few who ever give themselves the trouble of such inquiries, certainly there is a very great unconcernedness about the matter, and such as doth manifestly bespeak the disbelief that there is, or needs to be any such thing. And

Secondly. That men so easily take the matter for granted and are so easily satisfied. Certainly if there were that deep concern which the exigence and importance of the matter requires, men would not be very easy to admit of satisfaction in the case, and soon and slightly pass it over: and think they have done enough when they have asked the question, though it be answered they cannot tell how. If they have thought it probable, the thought yet would again and again return; But am I sure? Is this to be born spirit of spirit, and am I thus born? They would never think they could be too sure, or that enough could be done to make the matter sure.

Thirdly. That it is a thing so little insisted upon in prayer, among persons who profess the Christian name, that God would give his Spirit for this purpose, at least that the hearts of people so little go out in any such petitions and requests to God. If it should be asked them who allow prayer to have

any place in their practice; which way do your hearts work most in prayer? If they were to give an account of the sense of their hearts, would it not be this; "Lord, grant me what appears desirable to me in this world; that I may have my carnal desires satisfied to the full?" But who insists with importunity and earnestness, upon this great thing? "Lord, whatsoever thou grantest or deniest, grant me thy Spirit: let me be miserable, and reduced to poverty and beggary; let me wander up and down in the want of all things; but give me thy Spirit." Oh! what loud and importunate cries would there be for the Spirit, if this doctrine were believed? But God may withhold many things from men much more to their displeasure and dissatisfaction, than his Spirit, and about which they would much more sensibly complain: take away their estates and relations, and they complain and cry for them; but he may withdraw or withhold his Spirit, and they can go years together, and never complain or feel themselves grieved at it. The very execution of the threatening, does not make them uneasy: "My Spirit shall not strive;" it doth not strive with many from day to day, and year to year; and yet it doth not make them complain. This is too plain an argument, that it is not believed, that there is a necessity in order to the entering into God's kingdom, to be born of the Spirit.

[4.] That men are so little in expectation, and no more generally in a waiting posture, for the Spirit when they hear of it. How few are there who are in such expectations, day by day, more than they who wait for the morning; Oh! when shall this Spirit come? When shall the happy hour be of its sensible appearance in my dead and forlorn soul? When they hear, that the Spirit is as the wind which bloweth where it listeth; how few are ready to say, Oh! when shall I find its breathings upon me? When will it reach me? When shall I feel some of its powerful influences and refreshing gales?

[5.] That men are so little afraid of resisting the Spirit, and of giving it offence and provocation; so as that God should penally retract or withhold it. Certainly if this doctrine were believed, men would be in a very great dread upon this account; they would tremble to think of the possibility, or danger of giving that distaste by neglects, and resistance, to the spirit of grace, as to make it retire, not knowing whether ever it would return. Again

[6.] That the thoughts of this concernment, do no more mingle with men's affairs, in which they employ themselves here under the sun; and not more check their too impetuous pursuit of their worldly designs, which their hearts are so ever intent upon. If this doctrine were indeed believed, it

could not surely be, but that many times in the midst of secular business, such thoughts would come in; But am I yet born of the Spirit? All that I do is mere idle trifling impertinency when I do not yet know, whether I am so much as alive, in order to heaven and God's kingdom, and the eternal state which is before me. How seldom throughout the day, can any such thoughts be crowded into the minds of men? surely it would be a great check to the heat of their pursuits after the things of the world, if such thoughts did but now and then strike in; and they could not but strike in often, if the matter were indeed thoroughly believed; "I must be so born into heaven, or buried in all the darkness and misery of hell for ever."

[7.] If men were so concerned about this matter as the thorough belief of it, one would think, should infer; such thoughts must needs be a very great allay to the pleasure and sweetness of their sensual enjoyments. When they are relaxing themselves to pleasure, and allowing themselves the liberty of excursions, into this or that kind of sensual delight; certainly they could not so freely enjoy the creatures themselves, if it were considered; "I am yet at a very great uncertainty whether the divine life hath any place in my soul or no: whether the great work of the new creation, hath any, so much as the least beginnings in me?" Alas, what an infusion would this be of gall and wormwood, of bitterness and death, into whatsoever sensual delights, which would utterly spoil the sweetness of them; if it were believed that it is necessary to be thus born; and yet that it is uncertain whether we are thus born!

(2.) And pray then, what can we resolve this unconcernedness into, which is the other thing under this head; but their disbelief, and that they want a thorough persuasion of this truth, that I must be so born, or perish? For think of what else we would resolve it into: Is it the obscurity of the matter, and that it is merely an unintelligible thing? But why is this unintelligible, that there is a work necessary to be wrought upon the spirits of men by the Spirit of God, to render them suitable to God, and capable of blessedness in him? Indeed what can we think of that is plainer, if we consider the common state of men, and the present temper of their spirits? and how apparently necessary it is; that their spirits must be of another temper, in order to their being happy; and that there is nothing to be done in this kind, but by a proportionable cause; and that such an effect doth manifestly challenge to be wrought by such a cause? They are to be changed by the dispensation of the gospel from glory unto glory; where the progressive work

is spoken of, of the same nature and kind with that whereof we are speaking; even as by the Spirit of the Lord, (2 Cor. 3. 18.) that *as* does not signify similitude but identity: the work must be such as may plainly and evidently speak its own author; or so as that it may be peremptorily concluded,—this is a work so very agreeable to the Spirit of God, that nothing but the Spirit of God could have done it. Now the Spirit of God hath wrought like itself, and worthy of itself; and what it, and it only could do. It is true indeed that the nature of the work, and all the several parts of it, and the way of working, may be very much unknown things to persons as yet unexperienced. But that there is such a work necessary to be done, by which the spirits of men are to be changed, and that the Spirit of God only can do it. I know nothing can be pretended more intelligible than this; or why, at least, it should with any tolerable, or colourable pretence be said to be an unintelligible thing. It is not because men cannot understand this, but because they have no mind to believe it and admit the truth about it into their hearts, that they are so little willing of. Or is it, that the thing is inconsiderable, and not worthy of their regard? No man who hath not abjured his understanding, can have the face to say so. What can concern me more, than whether I have a station in God's kingdom, or not; where the state is such as includes and comprehends the whole of that felicity and blessedness, which an intelligent nature is capable of, and being excluded that kingdom, is to be excluded blessedness, and left a miserable creature for ever? Certainly no man who hath not abandoned man, and put off himself, but must acknowledge this to be the greatest concernment to him of all others; and that therefore he is not unmoved and unaffected, with this matter, because he thinks it inconsiderable and not worth his regard. The business therefore still returns hither, that it is not believed: men will not believe it, and therefore they are not concerned.

Thus far you see, that there is too plain evidence that this doctrine is not believed. The next thing would be to shew the unreasonableness of this disbelief. It might well astonish our hearts to think what there is of malignity and horror, in this belief among them who professedly own, that this revelation is from God; but yet, it is manifest, all the while, that they do not believe it: or that ever it should enter into the heart of a creature capable of understanding its own rise and original from the ever blessed God, to doubt or dispute, or deny so plain and manifest a revelation from him as this. The case arrives to this state, and we cannot give it a more favourable one, as if such a person should say to the great God, the Lord

of heaven and earth, "I take thee to have spoken by thy own Son, such and such words to men, but I do not believe them." This it plainly comes to. He hath said, that men must be born again, or they can never come into the kingdom of God; and if such persons would say, what is in their hearts, they must say too; We do not believe it. The matter comes to a direct and flat contradiction, a practical one, and which is more and worse than a verbal one, between them and the great Lord and Founder of this kingdom: as if they better knew the mind of God in this matter, than his own Son, who came out of his bosom; or better understood, who were to be of God's kingdom, and who not, than he into whose hands the management of all the affairs of this kingdom is put. Certainly when this matter comes to be discussed we shall find it impossible to pitch upon any thing in our own thoughts which carries more of monstrosity and horror in it, than the disbelief of such a truth.

SERMON V.*

WE have insisted upon this subject doctrinally at large, and made some entrance upon the use. That which we have, in the first place, inferred, is ; That this being so evident and important a truth, it is very strange, it should not be more generally believed among christians, than apparently it is. We have shewed that generally it is not believed, in the last exercise ; and are now to shew

II. The great unreasonableness and perversity of this disbelief in reference to this great important truth. We insist the longer and more distinctly upon this use, because it is the use which our Lord himself makes of his discourse, upon this subject, as you may see in the 11th and 12th verses, which I shall have occasion to consider and open afterwards. The great unreasonableness of not believing this truth will appear, if you consider—how much is to be said for it and—how very little and insignificant any thing is, which can be said against it.

1. Consider how much is to be said for it, and hath in part been said. As much surely as any considering person would think necessary to recommend a thing to his belief which he did not know before. I would appeal to men, what would they expect ? Or what condition would they require any such thing to be qualified with, which they would think to be a competently credible object of their belief ? What would they

* Preached January 9th, 1677. Cordwainer's Hall.

say is necessary? What suppositions would they make? If you had a voice from heaven, or an angel sent to you on purpose; or if Christ himself should appear, and speak these words to you, as he did to Nicodemus; then you would believe? Even they who say so would soon find, if God should make such trials with them, it would be to as little purpose, as to clothe it with the evidence wherewith he doth recommend it. For you see though our Lord himself did speak these things to Nicodemus, yet he hath cause to complain of infidelity still. But what, Is not a thing sufficiently credible without such a recommendation as this? Or is it not a most unreasonable extravagance to say, "Except ourselves, with our own eyes, see signs and wonders we will not believe?" What have you a vision and voice for every thing you believe which you do not see with your own eyes? Let it be considered what we have to assure us of this great truth.

(1.) We have the plain reasonableness of the thing itself: which will appear by laying together these several considerations.

[1.] That the kingdom of God imports a state of perfect felicity in the highest notion of that kingdom; or a state of preparation thereto, or gradual tendency thither-ward, in the first or lower notion of it. This is a thing plain and obvious to all our thoughts, that the kingdom of God imports a state of persons either perfectly happy already; or else tending to a state of happiness.

[2.] Consider that such who are no way within the compass of this kingdom, are not happy as yet. Look upon any man in his natural state, and any one will soon acknowledge, I am not happy as yet. I appeal to your own senses, and to the common sense of men, can you say, you are already happy? What do you know no wants? No desires? I wish it were better with me than it is? A plain indication to every man's sense, that he is not happy as yet. And

[3.] That it is not in the power of all this world to make men happy. He who enjoys never so much of it, it is not a little more will make him happy; for it is manifest an additional degree of a good of the same kind, will not do it; it must be a good of another kind. They who have most of this world, have they never thought themselves unhappy, or pronounced so concerning their present state *Ante obitum nemo* &c. Pagan light hath seen so much, that in this life no one can be happy; who have known how to make their best of this world, as well as any of us. Besides it is in the reason of the thing manifest, that no man can be happy, as long as he knows himself to be mortal. There is a gloomy thing called death still hanging

over my head, and it will light upon me one time or other. Can any man be happy as long as the case is so, and while he hath no comfortable expectation of any thing better hereafter? Men are a little pleased sometimes, while they can forget dying. But what is all that happiness which depends only upon a man's forgetfulness; that is, which is capable of being undone and blasted by a thought? That is a pitiful happiness, which a thought can destroy and blow away. Such only is that happiness which this world affords, and which can grow up out of this earth. I conclude therefore, that nothing can be more evident to the common sense and experience of all men; than that as they are not yet happy, so they cannot be, by any thing this world can give them.

[4.] That they cannot be happy in God without having their spirits changed, and made suitable to him. It puts an equal impossibility in the way of my happiness, whether, either my spirit be suitable to such or such a thing, and it hath not enough in it to make me happy; or that such another thing hath enough in it to make me happy, but my spirit is not suitable to it. As it is in reference to the matter of nourishment; neither can that nourish which doth not afford fit matter, or suitable aliment to a man's body; nor doth that which is never so suitable nourish if it cannot be received, or there is an aversion and dislike to it. A stone cannot nourish, because it is not fit aliment; and the best food cannot nourish, if the appetite is averse and disaffected to it. That person who can think of God with no pleasure, takes no complacency in him; and who bears towards him, not only a cold, but an averse and disaffected heart can never be happy in God. And such is every one who is as yet only born flesh of flesh, for the carnal mind is enmity to God; and they who are after the flesh, do savour only the things of the flesh.

[5.] That men cannot change their own hearts, so as to attemper them to God, and make them suitable to him, and capable of his converse, and of being blessed in him. This must also be evident to every man's conscience, who doth but reflect and commune a little with himself. If any man say, I can change the temper of my own soul; it is true it doth not love God, and take a present felicity in him, but I can alter it and bring it to that pass: any one who will say so, must be the most self condemned creature in all the world. Canst thou turn and change thy own heart, and wilt let it go as it is, averse and disaffected to God, one moment longer? If they can work that change themselves, they are utterly inexcusable that they do not do it out of hand. But if they cannot, as whosoever will go into that trial, will soon find; then in the

[6.] Place, God must do it, or it can never be done; and this is that begetting spirit of spirit, which we speak of, as necessary to a man's coming into the kingdom of God, or being happy. And these considerations laid together, make it apparently reasonable in itself, unto any man who will allow himself to consider, that such a work must be done, in order to such an end. Now how perverse a thing is it to disbelieve and reject so plain a truth, which will not admit of debate? If a man bring the matter to a serious scrutiny, and will but reasonably consider it, he must yield the cause, as soon as he begins to think of it.

(2.) Add thereto, the authority of the Revealer, which ought to silence our spirits, and bring them to a compliance with the revelation, though the thing were not evident, and we had much to say against it. And here we have a twofold revealer, to consider, and speak briefly of; that is—the subordinate, and secondary revealer, namely, the evangelist—and the primary and first Revealer; our Lord Jesus himself. If there is any doubt in the case, it must be concerning the one or the other of these; either that this holy inspired man did not truly report to us Christ's words, and that he tells us Christ said what he never said; or else that our Lord Jesus himself did not say truly, in what he said. As to the

[1.] Why should we think that this blessed man, should write down such words as these in his gospel as spoken by Christ, if he had not spoke them? If any man would think this matter is not to be believed upon that account; it doth manifestly appear, if we would think no better of him, by the general strain and tenour of his writing, that he writes like a rational man; and then supposing him a rational intelligent man, it cannot but be supposed, that he must have some design or other, in whatsoever he did set down. Now what can any man think his design should be, to say, that our Lord said such words as these, if he did not say them? You would easily suppose that John being by his calling and office a disciple and apostle of Christ, that he must needs think himself, upon that account, concerned and engaged to promote that interest, which he had now espoused, and to propagate to the utmost, the Christian name and profession. We cannot in reason but suppose him to be very intent upon this. If he were so, and would disguise and palliate things, and represent them otherwise than they were; surely he would have misrepresented them to the advantage of his cause with men, and not to the disadvantage. If we could allow ourselves to suspect; as we who are christians cannot, though it is possible that such disallowed thoughts may sometimes start up in our

minds; that he would disguise or misrepresent any thing; we must suppose that he would do it, so as to make the profession and cause, which he had undertaken, look more plausibly, and be more alluring and inviting, and fit to draw multitudes, to embrace the Christian profession as he had done. But would any man who had such a design as this, if he would misrepresent things, offer to put such devised things in those records which he was to transmit up and down the world, and from age to age; as he could not but know would be universally disrelished; and then which it was impossible that any thing could be more ungrateful to the spirits of men, or more opposite to their lusts and interests? What to tell men that they must undergo a new birth, and must be born spirit of spirit, be refined into a certain sort of spiritual beings by the work of God upon them; or else they can never come into the kingdom of God? Certainly if he would disguise, and misrepresent, he would not have done it on that hand; he would have done it rather on the other; by indulging and complying with the prejudices and lusts and interests of men. There remains not therefore any colour for an imagination, that he should tell us, our Lord spake such words as these, if he did not. And there can be less pretence in the

[2.] Place, to think or imagine, that our Lord Jesus Christ, did speak these words, but that he misrepresented the matter, and did not speak the thing as it was. For what can be supposed, that he did not know his own power, or that he did not know his own mind? He who is appointed the great Lord of this kingdom, the very Founder of the constitution, and who is to gather and bring in all to it whoever shall come into it; did he not know upon what terms men could be brought into the compass of God's kingdom? Or was it to be supposed possible that any should intrude, and maintain their intrusion into this kingdom, against him and the supreme power which he hath in it? Briefly consider, either he must be deceived himself or have a design to deceive us. Why, what should that aim at? With what purpose and intent? What was to be got by it? What end could be served? If it could consist with his nature, with whom guile was never found; yet certainly it never could with his design: we cannot suppose any by-design he should aim at; and with his great and main design, it holds no agreement either way. But with what horror should men's infidelity be thought of, when it doth even in the very substance of the thing, cast such reproaches as these upon our great Lord? What is infidelity in reference to any gospel truth, but a disassent that this is true; and so it is, saying, that it is not true, when he saith, it is; and opposing our sense to his plain and express word.

This is the complaint our Lord makes in this case; We testify the things we have known; As if he should say: "I speak upon knowledge; I understand all these things very well, they all lie before me, and within my prospect. I testify what I see, and is under my own eye; and ye will not receive our witness. If I speak to you of earthly things, and you will not believe;" (that is, in respect of the manner of their presentation, not the matter represented. It was not the matter ultimately represented, but mediately. He speaks with reference to a known custom among the Jews of baptizing their proselytes: the proselytes of justice, were constantly admitted by baptism among them; and then forsook father and mother, and all their former natural relations, and came into new relations throughout. Other usages belonging to the Jewish constitution, are called in Scripture by the suitable names of worldly and carnal things, like this expression here, of earthly things. 'I speak to you of what these earthly things, which are in use among yourselves, do signify; and yet, you do not believe me; you will not take in what I say, when I go so familiarly to work with you, only to shew you the meaning of your own practice, and what is done among yourselves;') "how shall you believe when I come to tell you of heavenly things; which have no dependance upon, or relation to such usages among yourselves; as the Son of Man's descent from heaven, and ascent into it again; and his being on earth and in heaven at the same time?" as his words afterwards are. "What do you make of this, when you will not believe me opening to you so plain and obvious a rudiment of religion, that men must undergo a change in the temper of their spirits, signified by the practice, which is common and usual among yourselves, of baptizing them; as if they were born into a new world, who come to be proselytes of your religion?" It is therefore upon the whole matter a thing full of horror, and which ought to make our hearts to tremble to think that such infidelity should lurk in the spirits of men who call themselves christians, in reference to so great and unquestionable things of Christianity; and that it should admit of any debate. Such expostulations we find used by our Lord elsewhere: "I come to you," saith he, "in my Father's name, and you will not believe me." Monstrous partiality and disaffection of men's hearts, to divine truths, even because they are truth, and because they are divine! So our Lord expressly speaks: Because I tell you the truth, you will not believe me, John 8. 45. As if it were truth as truth, which was hated by men; and which they therefore cannot endure, because it is true. And when we consider too, that to believe a divine truth with a divine faith, is a great piece of homage

which we pay to the great and glorious Lord of heaven and earth, the first and eternal truth, into whose veracity the whole matter is resolved. That is, the thing is therefore certainly true and credible, and to be believed as true; because it comes from the first and eternal truth, and is a derivation or beam of light, from that original light. It is the homage of a reasonable creature to the Author of his being, to have his soul overwrought and swayed, by the authority of his word. Because he hath said it, I yield and submit; I dare not but own it as true, and believe it as true. And then what an affront must it be on the other hand, to the great and eternal God, when such truths as these so plainly proposed to us in his word, are by infidelity excluded and shut out of our hearts! The authority of his word does not prevail to weigh and sink them down into our souls; but they hover on the surface, and we entertain them with a notional opinion, as true; but in the mean time, exclude them out of our hearts as false. For there it is that infidelity hath its seat, as faith hath its seat there; With the heart man believeth unto righteousness. Rom. 10. 10. That assent is not worthy the name of faith which doth not enter into and possess and command a man's soul. Then it is indeed that a truth is entertained with a divine faith, when the thing revealed is received not as the word of man, but as the word of God. This comes from the eternal God, I take it upon the authority of his word; and hence it comes to be urged upon a man's heart, and to impress its own stamp and likeness there. This is the believing any thing with a divine faith. So that indeed this truth, of the necessity of a man's being born spirit; that is, who do then come to be born spirit, at that very time; it doth in this way insinuate, and get into them; not by violence, or offering force to human nature; we are to imagine no such thing: but it doth by a plain and evident discovery of the truth, slide into it, and through it, notwithstanding all the prejudices which obstruct and shut up the heart of man; and so creates that faith, by which men believe unto righteousness and blessedness. And therefore it is plainly said, They who are of God do hear God's words. John 8. 47. Their hearing doth include believing: Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. The expression there, to be of God, is only a short eliptical expression, for being born or begotten of him. You therefore receive not his words because you are not born of God; therefore his word doth not enter into you, and has no place in you. And certainly it ought to fill our souls with deep resentments, to think that there should be such an obstruction in the hearts of men towards God; that a discovery

about such an important matter, coming with so much evidence from him, and upon his authority, cannot be believed; when men do so ordinarily and easily believe one another, about matters wherein they take themselves to be very much concerned.

Thus much then is to be said for it; as to the little which can be said against it, see the close of the foregoing discourse. This is the first use of this truth, I should proceed to the rest, &c.

SERMON VI.*

WE have at large opened the words, and made some progress in the use. We have inferred from hence, how strange it is that so plain and important a doctrine as this cannot obtain to be believed: that we insisted somewhat largely upon. We proceed to another inference,—that it is evident the design of regeneration is to prepare and fit men to be of God's kingdom.—This is that which he hath in his eye and aim, when he begets souls by his own Spirit in a holy spirituality, suitable to the productive cause. It is very becoming a reasonable creature when he observes some great work is to be done, and there is great apparatus for the doing of it, to inquire, What doth all this mean? What is all this for? We are plainly told, that such a work as this is to be done upon men, as begetting them anew; we see great preparations are made for it; the gospel sent down from heaven on purpose; an office constituted and set up to dispense it; time sanctified and made sacred; solemn ordinances appointed, a frame of worship instituted. It would certainly be great inadvertency not to consider within ourselves, What is all this for? Why all this is for regenerating men first; and what is that for? Why to bring them into God's kingdom. I doubt it is not seriously considered as it

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ought to be, how great a design this is, and how intent the blessed God appears upon it, by begetting men of the Spirit, to form them for his kingdom. And from hence arrives several subordinate instructions. As

I. That when a man comes to be regenerate, he is born to very great things. If God hath given us to understand so much of his design, that it is on purpose, and in order to the instating them into his kingdom, that he hath begotten them spirit of spirit; certainly it is a very great and glorious estate, that every regenerate person is born to. We commonly measure our judgments concerning the fortunes of this or that person by his birth: we say concerning the son of a rich or great man, of a nobleman or prince; that he is born an heir to great and ample possessions, and will certainly be a possessor of them; though there are many things intervening which may cut off a person born to great things from ever being the possessor of them. But here the case is sure, and not liable to contingences, which can infer frustration and disappointment. It is very unreasonable all this while that we so little consider this, and have so mean low thoughts of the business of regeneration, or regenerate persons: certainly they ought to appear very venerable persons in our eyes. Here is one, as it is meet for us to judge, who is born of God, spirit of spirit; a refined being is begotten in him, which entitles him to eternal glory, an everlasting kingdom. Indeed it is not strange that such persons are obscure unto the most of the world: The world is said not to know God's sons: "What manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God?" that is, made such; for God's calling, is making them, what he calls them. He calls things which are not, and makes them existent things. It is subjoined, Therefore the world knows us not, because it knew not him, 1 John 3. 1. There is a heavenly progeny among them, whom the world do not know; but though the world do not know God's sons, methinks, they should know one another, and not think so meanly of one another's state and condition as the rest of the world think of them. It is a most emphatical scripture, 1 Pet. 1. 3, 4. Being begotten again to a lively hope—unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us. A regenerate person is no mean person, if you consider his great parentage and high extraction; or the inheritance to which he is born, and the high and glorious hopes which are before him.

II. This instruction also proceeds hence, that we are to look upon it as a very unbecoming thing, when we regret what God further doth, in the prosecution of this design. He hav-

ing begotten persons on purpose for his kingdom, and to partake of the glory and blessedness of its consummate state, doth gradually, as he hath prepared and adapted them for it, translate and take up into that kingdom, such as were before born into it, and begotten to it. It is unreasonable to regret this, whether we ourselves are the spectators only; or whether we also come to be the subjects of this dispensation.

When we are spectators of it as to others, and see him transuming and taking up some out of this lower state of his kingdom, into the more glorious state of it, whom he hath begotten thereto before; why are we to regret this? What, that God should have the disposing of his own children, whom he hath begotten, as the Father of spirits, spirit of spirit? Indeed whatsoever there is of displeasure towards us in such dispensations, ought to be considered and entertained by us, with a due sense of it; but what there is of divine good pleasure expressed in it, ought also to be submitted to with an awful and complacential subjection. How unreasonable a thing is it, that we should grudge him his own children whom he hath begotten? We should think it very hard, if we dispose of any child of ours in sickness to be nursed abroad, and we cannot have it home without a quarrel when we think fit to have it home.

And how unworthy is it when men regret to be the subjects of this dispensation of God; and cannot endure the thoughts of going into his kingdom, the most perfect and glorious state of it, unto which if they are regenerate, they were born? What, to be unwilling to go to our own Father, and have our spirits return to him, when he hath begotten them for himself? How vile a thing is this! What terrene, dunghill hearts are ours which so cleave to this vile earth? We should think it a most unnatural thing in a son, who has been long in a foreign country, especially if in straits and wants there; and who is not so as to spiritual concernments? and yet should regret to be called home by his father: for that would carry this signification with it, that he counts any miseries more tolerable than his father's presence. Certainly it must needs speak what is very unlike and unworthy of a child. I know not what we can have to say for ourselves, that there should be so few unfeigned desires, after our Father's house and our own home; and when we say, we belong to his family, and have been born into it, and begotten of him; that yet we never care to come there. Still a little longer, a little longer, we would be here below, in this mean and abject state; as though we were contented to endure any thing of misery and calamity and turmoil, and all the impurity of this world; rather than be at home

with our own Father. There is an aptness to regret God's known purpose; we struggle and shrink at the thoughts of dying: but certainly that must argue a very great distemper of mind; for what, would we not have the end attained; would we have the design defeated and blasted, for which we were born? if we were ever born spirit of spirit, the design of it was to prepare us for that kingdom into which we regret to go; we were born on purpose for it, and yet we would not come there.

III. We further learn this instruction hence, that it is a most highly becoming thing for the regenerate, very much to mind that state for which they have been born. No one is wont to be blamed for minding things no higher than what he was born to. Many times we reckon it a piece of unwarrantable and unbecoming arrogance among men, when they aspire to things beyond their sphere and compass, and aim at things above their birth: but a christian is not to blamed, when he aspires to immortality and eternal glory, and all the felicity and blessedness of God's kingdom above; for it is that he is born to. It is justly blamed when the spirits of any are found visibly to sink below their birth and state to which they were born, and the grandeur of their families; when men born of noble parentage, who have that which they call generous blood running in their veins, do mind only mean things, and discover themselves to be of abject ungenerous spirits; this is reckoned a great incongruity among men. And certainly there is nothing more unbecoming than that a christian should mind and be intent upon things which are of a mean and base allay, and forget the kingdom he was born to. We may aspire high; our birth and state will justify us in it; for we are born of God, and born to a kingdom. Why, to let our thoughts grovel, and our affections be scattered in the dust of the earth, to embrace dunghills; we have nothing whereto to impute it, but an ignoble and mean temper of spirit; which certainly when we know, and can reflect upon, it should be far from us to allow; and wherein we find ourselves guilty, we should lay our hands upon our mouth, for it is unaccountable, and nothing is to be said. See how the persons are described whom God sorts out and distinguishes from the rest of men, for eternal blessedness Rom. 2. 6. It is said that God will judge every man according to his works. God is represented there in the person of a judge, and as undertaking the work of judgment upon all this world; and the world accordingly is divided into two parts, as the judgment of God finds them, and will distinguish them; that is, they are distinguished by their final states. There are some who are for life, as that which by the determination of

the judge belongs to them; and others are for indignation and wrath, and tribulation and anguish. These are distinguished by their spirits, or present characters, in order to that final partition of them. These are "such who by patient continuance in all well doing, do seek honour and glory and immortality." This is the character of their spirits; and to such when God will render to every one according to his works, he will render eternal life. The other sort are described by their character in reference to their state; that is "who are contentious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness; to them he will render indignation and wrath," &c. To them who are contentious: it is plain enough, if we consider the scope and current of the apostle's discourse, what he means by being contentious here. If you consider it in opposition to what is subjoined, who do not obey the truth; or by way of collation with what he had been saying in the foregoing chapter; "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men:" it is plain the truth which he speaks of all along in that discourse is practical truth; or the truth by which they should be governed in their practice, and according to which they ought to square and conduct their course. It is very plain the contention he means, is a contention against such truth; when men's spirits resist and withstand the tendency and design and dictates of it, the practical and governing dictates which do more or less obtain in all; some even in the pagan world, and those which are more clear in the gospel; but somewhat or other of practical truth there is in all. And this is that which is the common character of those, who shall finally perish; who are contentious against that truth which should have governed them; and when it should have been as on a throne in their souls, is shut up as in a prison. They held it in unrighteousness, and fettered it in chains, and pent it up, and confined it only to the notion of the mind; let it hover only in dark ineffectual notions, and never admitted it to walk forth into their lives and practices; and have that inspection and power there which it ought to have had. And that practical truth is resisted in nothing more than in this, when men addict themselves in defiance of it, to things which their own reason and experience tell them, are not proportionable to them; to earthly, terrene things, which they cannot but know are not commensurate, to intelligent and immortal spirits.

They who are of such abject mean spirits, the Lord will be ashamed at last, to be called their God. Heb. 11. 16. But now they seek a better country, that is, a heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. These are a sort of persons who approve themselves his children, and evi-

dence of whom they are born ; the temper of their minds, and the course and drift of their designs, shew of what Father they are descended. They mind and seek a better country, wherefore he is not ashamed to be called their God : "These are my own race ; they are suitable to me." But it is a very sad and dreadful intimation to those who are of mean, base and earthly spirits : He will be ashamed to be called their God : "These are no children of mine ; they were never born of my Spirit : I never had any such children."

IV. We further learn, that we are to consider them as most miserable creatures, who are not regenerate. Whosoever are for God's kingdom are regenerated on purpose to prepare them for it. They therefore who are not regenerate, want the radical, fundamental preparation ; the *primordia*, or first principles by which they are to be adopted to that kingdom : and have, in the very temper and frame of their spirits, their doom ; there is this to be read concerning their states, that they are not for the kingdom of God. Men are entered into this kingdom here by regeneration, or being born into it ; and so growing up here, are transplanted into the eternal, glorious kingdom. Now it is a most miserable case that there is but one inlet or way into the kingdom of God, and men should not be in that way, or so much as about it, or apprehend they have any concern to be so ; as the case is with too many, even the generality of those who are unregenerate. But then what is their hope, or what can it be ? Do they think to leap over this initial state of God's kingdom, and get into the kingdom of glory without ever coming into the kingdom of grace ? How strange a disappointment must they needs find at last ! For they are to consider that this country is the only prolific country ; they are not new born in heaven ; there they are perfected, not begotten. As there are none who become first wicked in hell ; they are there most wicked, or wicked to the utmost ; but they were first wicked here on earth ; why so it is in reference to heaven too ; here men must first be spiritual and holy, and born of the Spirit ; and become most spiritual and holy, when they are most blessed above. And therefore they are certainly in a most miserable case, who since regeneration is designed as the preparation finally and ultimately for heaven, and for this eternal, glorious kingdom ; are neither regenerate, nor apprehensive of any concern they have to be so.

V. We learn, that as the misery of the unregenerate is justly said to be great ; so their folly may be concluded to be no way inferior to their misery. They are as foolish as they are miserable, that is, they speak and think and reckon upon it, that it shall be well with them hereafter, though they are

never regenerate; they fortify their own hearts into a confidence, that they shall attain things which they were never born to, and have no other reason to expect. You would think it a great piece of madness, for a man to go about and say, that he expects a kingdom, and doubts not but he shall be a great prince; though he walks up and down in rags, and is only the son of a ploughman or some mean person: he would be thought fit to live in chains. Why, you will certainly say, The expectations of all unregenerate persons, to be hereafter happy in God's kingdom, do not carry this folly in it. Yea, it carries in it much greater folly; for we cannot say, it is impossible that a person of a very mean parentage, should come to greatness in this world. Histories of former and latter times, give us some instances of this kind; but you would think him a madman for all that, who should say so. As certainly he would be truly counted so, who should hope for every thing which is possible, merely because it is possible; as he would be who feared every thing which is merely possible to come to pass that is hurtful and evil to him; as if a man should fear that every bit of meat he eats should choke him; or that in his ordinary walks in the streets, a tile should fall and beat out his brains. Thousands of such accidents are not impossible; but if a man should fear them continually, it were certainly a great folly, and would put a great deal of misery into his life. It would be equally an absurd thing, to hope every thing which is possible, only because it is possible, and no more; but then to hope for that which is simply and absolutely impossible, and which the shortest and quickest turn of thought would convince a man is so; is a madness beyond all imagination. If you hear a man walking in the streets in rags, and saying. "I hope at some time to be a prince or great monarch before I die;" you cannot say, he hopes for an impossible thing: But if you hear an unregenerate man say, "I hope I shall have the eternal kingdom, though I continue unregenerate, and die just as I am;" his hope is simply impossible; for there is an inconsistency even in the temper of his spirit, with the purity and felicity of that kingdom; besides the irreversible determination of the righteous and supreme Lord of it, and the Disposer of all the concerns of it. This is therefore the strongest piece of folly, which ever had place in any human breast, that a man should be yet unborn of God, and never reckon upon being other than he is; and yet expect a place in God's kingdom.

I proceed now to the third inference,—That it is a most wonderful mercy, that any such work as this should be done among the children of men, as begetting them spirit of spirit, in order to their coming into his kingdom.—This is a mercy for

ever to be had in admiration, and which we can never enough adore, if we allow our thoughts to work a little upon the following considerations.

I. The subject of it, or who they are who are thus born. Why, the most undeserving creatures; for alas! what can they pretend to deserve who are by nature children of wrath, and exposed from their birth, to his displeasure? and altogether uninclined either to desire or comply with that by which such a work as this was to be wrought upon them: who were uninclined so much as to desire, "Oh that the transforming power of the Holy Ghost might come upon me!" or disposed to fall in with the motions of the Spirit in order to it? And besides, what a wonderful mercy was it that ever such impure creatures should be dealt withal, in such a way? How would any of us like to have that for our employment to touch the ulcerous sores of some poor wretch lying in rags upon a dunghill, in order to the cure of them? Yea, and most disaffected and opposite to the work, and the worker of it, full of enmity, and apt to strive and contend, and rebel, against the blessed Spirit of God, whenever he comes to touch upon their hearts, in order to such a work as this.

II. The Author of the work, the blessed Spirit. What a wonderful mercy is it that the Spirit should ever come down amongst men, upon such a design; and become inclined and engaged to diffuse its life and vital influence, in a world lost in carnality and death? This appears if you consider either its purity, and that the Spirit of holiness should come with such a design, into so impure hearts: or its high and excellent dignity; if such a work as this could have been done by the hand of man; or it would have sufficed to have sent an angel, it had been less wonderful: but that the Spirit should come, and come on purpose; as though he had said, "I myself will immediately attend this affair, it shall be my own doing; no other hand is proportionable." How highly hath he merited to be called the Spirit of grace! When the malignity of men's hearts against it is intended to be represented and aggravated, it is said, they have done despite to the Spirit of grace, (Heb. 10. 29.) the Spirit of all love and goodness and benignity and sweetness. Certainly we have reason to call it the Spirit of grace, and to account and reckon it so, who came among men upon such an errand as this. Or again,

III. The nature of this work. Why, it is begetting men, and what does that import? It imports directly a total change, or a change throughout; and it imports by consequence a resulting relation. They who are begotten, become children to him who begets. What a mercy was this that such a thing

should be undertaken, as a total change, and that every part should be made new? If some little alteration would have served the turn, the Spirit of God might easily be supposed to be contented to do it; but to make them new throughout, and in every part, which begetting signifies; why the greatness of the undertaking speaks the mercifulness of the undertaker. And besides there is the relation which results and is consequentially imported in it. The blessed God might thus have reasoned off the design; "What, shall I beget them; then must I be their Father: and what, to have such miscreants as they, my children? Why should I beget them by my Spirit, and become a Father to them, who are already of their father the devil? shall I go to make the devil's children mine?"

IV. The end, which is to bring them at last into his own kingdom. It is a wonderful mercy, that they who are altogether born in sin, and born under wrath and ruin, should have such thoughts taken up about them; and the holy and eternal Spirit employed on purpose, to beget them anew, and form them throughout; and bring them into the presence of his glory, to dwell with him and reign with him for ever. They so partake in this kingdom, as to be kings in it, "He washed us from our sins in his blood, and made us kings and priests unto God and his Father." What a wonderful mercy to engage the blessed Spirit to this employment about the blessed spirits of men, upon so important an account, and in order to so high and great a glory!

SERMON VII.*

IT is the use we have in hand; for which purpose some practical inferences have been recommended to you; and others do yet remain. That which is the fourth inference you may take thus;—That they cannot but be very gross hypocrites who carry that semblance and shew with them, of having a standing in this kingdom of God; but were never thus born into it.—Here we have these two things to do —to shew that such pretenders are hypocrites upon this account and—to shew the absurdity and folly of that hypocrisy.

I. That there is manifest hypocrisy in the case. In order to the evincing this, we need only to consider with ourselves, that such persons really have not a standing in God's kingdom, and yet that they would be taken to have. Hypocrisy is when persons pretend to that good which they have not. It is not any kind of semblance which will put a glory upon us; but the simulation of some good or other; when men pretend to be better, or that their state is better, than indeed it is, or than

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they are. Nor is it necessary to a man's being a hypocrite that he should understand himself to be so; but only that he carries a shew or semblance, whether he deceives others by it only, or himself also; of that good which he hath not. And that such persons are not of God's kingdom we have largely shewn already. They neither are, nor is it possible they should be, upon other terms than by being born into it. There is no other possible way to come into this kingdom, or to be made suitable to the nature and end of this constitution; but by being new born spirit of spirit. And therefore that good which such persons pretend to, they have not, whoever they are who are not yet new born. They pretend to be the loyal subjects of the kingdom of God, but it is no such thing, if they are not by a new birth, made so; for by their old and natural birth, and as they were born flesh of the flesh, they were never so. And yet it is very apparent on the other hand, that there are many who would be taken to be of that kingdom, though really they were never regenerate or born into it. And this added to the former, evinces the matter we have in hand; that such persons are egregious hypocrites, who are not of God's kingdom, and yet pretend to be of it. And that many of the unregenerate do so, we have such evidences of it as these:

1. That they are very loth to go under the contrary repute. There are none but are either subjects of this kingdom, or rebels against the authority and laws of it. There is no medium between rebellion and subjection; all are either subjects, or rebels. Now they do not profess rebellion, and think it inconvenient to go under the name of rebels, or avow rebellion against the Majesty of heaven. It is plain they would be thought subjects, and are loth to wear that inscription upon their foreheads: Here is a rebel against heaven. They would be thought to be what they are not.

2. They conform themselves to some parts of the law of this kingdom; that is, in such respects wherein their compliance is more easy, and less expensive, and wherein there is less disinclination of heart to it. There are many very easy externals, which being observed and complied with, a reputation may be gained, without any great pains, or inconvenience and loss, or without imposing too much upon themselves. There is an external obedience to the letter of the law, in some of the less principal commands and precepts of it: For if we compare them, we must acknowledge all that duty which immediately terminates upon God, to be more principal than that which immediately terminates upon men. Possibly they can be so content to put on the garb of just and charita-

ble persons; yea, if you go with them no further than the externals of religion, they can be content to come to the public assemblies, and to sit before the Lord as his people sit; with their mouths, *ore tenus*, they shew much love, (Ezek. 33. latter end,) that is, they are very devout persons. And while they do all this, what doth it signify, but that they have a great mind to be taken for subjects, and some of God's kingdom; and think it possible to gain a repute by such easy means as these, which they have no cause at all to regret.

3. They declare against the more open rebellions of others. It may be they will lift up loud outcries against very gross wickedness in other men, and condemn them for appearing to be, that which themselves in heart really are.

4. They claim the privileges of the subjects of this kingdom. They will have their children to be enrolled, even as theirs who are the members of it, and it may be, come themselves to the Lord's table. They expect the protection and blessing of the great King of this kingdom; though possibly they may not have much recourse to him about the concerns of their souls; yet they believe and hope, he will succeed them in their affairs, and prosper them in the world, and save them at last. Why, all these things plainly manifest, that they have a great mind to be taken to be of this kingdom, what really and indeed they are not; and that there is a great deal of hypocrisy in the case. But

II. We are to shew the absurdity and folly of that hypocrisy. This will be manifest too, if you consider these two things that it is without any colourable pretence, and—that it is without any valuable design. If one would put any semblance or shew of being what one is not, and manage the business with any wisdom or cunning, there must be these two conjunct, that is, the disguise must be framed with a great deal of art; and some considerable advantage must be got by it. For otherwise to make such a shew to no purpose, though there were never so great ingenuity shewed in it, is but to play the fool. But now the hypocrisy which is to be found in this case, must needs be absurd, as having neither colourable pretence, nor valuable design.

1. It hath no sufficiently colourable pretence. Some pretence there must be; otherwise it could not be hypocrisy. But there wants a specious and plausible pretence in the case; that is, that one should pretend himself to be of this kingdom of God, which consists all of select persons; and yet he never hath been born into such a state. To pretend to be in a state

into which there was no imaginable way to come, and with the supposed denial, which we must suppose in the present case; of the only way by which it was possible one could come into such a state. It is impossible there can be a specious pretence for this. But to be a little more particular: It is plain,

(1.) That men do in this case pretend to be that which they abhor. They pretend at present to be of the initial kingdom, or the kingdom of grace; that is in short, they pretend to be saints; every one pretends to be so, who pretends to be of this kingdom, for it is a kingdom of such: but being as yet unregenerate, they abhor to be so, and dislike the purity of that state to which they do pretend. This is very gross and absurd. And

(2.) They pretend to hope for what they do not desire, and that is equally absurd. They hope they say to be in the consummate and glorious kingdom above; but they do not desire to be there: for it is impossible an unregenerate, unholy heart can. No man can desire that which is unsuitable to his nature, and to which his heart, in its habitual inclinations, is repugnant. Every one who hath this hope in him, purifies himself even as he is pure, 1 John 3. 3. Now for a man to pretend to the hope of that, which in his own heart he doth not desire; this is a most absurd pretence. For though it is very possible to desire that which a man doth not hope for; there are many such irrational desires of things which appear in themselves worth the having; but which we apprehend no possibility of having: such childish and foolish desires and wouldings there may be, of what we have no hope to attain. But it is impossible there can be, on the other hand, the hope of that whereof I have no desire; for hope doth superadd to desire, and therefore doth suppose it. Whatever I hope for I desire: though I do not necessarily because I desire a thing therefore hope for it; for to make a thing hopeful to me it must be possible, and it must be arduous or attended with some kind of appearing difficulty. But I may desire a thing, merely because it appears good, whether I apprehend it possible to be attained or no; or though there is nothing of arduousness appearing in the case. It may be the object of desire, but not of hope.

And most manifest it is, that whosoever are not thus born spirit of spirit, have not any desire to be partakers in this kingdom rightly understood. That is, it is not possible that an unrenewed, unspiritual heart can desire the employment and business; the purity and enjoyments of that state; or the divine presence in which they are to converse. All by which they can so much as cheat themselves in the case, is only this, hav-

ing taken up a defective or false notion of heaven, or a future state of blessedness; they hope they say, to be happy, when they die, without having ever formed a right notion, what that happiness is, or wherein it consists. But be it what it will, and though it is never so mistaken a notion, it is plain they desire that happines which they do desire, only as it is put in comparison with hell, not as it stands in comparison with earth. They had rather indeed be happy, with such an imaginary happiness, as they fancy to themselves in heaven; than to go to hell: but they had rather continue on earth perpetually, enjoying the good things it affords; than that heaven itself, though suited by their own imaginations never so much to the wish of their own hearts. An immortality on earth would be chosen rather. This is not to desire heaven as its blessedness or chief good; for whatsoever I desire as such, I desire absolutely. It is impossible I can take that for my chief good, which I would be content never to enjoy. As much as they pretend to desire heaven, yet they wish never to come there, if they could stay in this world always, and have what it affords them. Therefore I say, they most absurdly pretend to hope for that heaven, as their best good, which they do not so much as desire ever to enjoy. And

(3.) There is a great deal of absurdity in the pretence upon this account, that very often it is to be seen through. It is so thin and slight a cover that any eye may even see through it. All who are hypocrites are not artificial ones: there are a great many hypocrites, and the far greater part of them, who are mere bunglers at it; they are hypocrites without any skill or artifice; and so they take up a pretence which any body, with half an eye, may penetrate and see through. As if for example, a person who pretends to be a subject of God's kingdom, and yet makes it manifest in the course of his conversation that he stands in no awe of God at all, which is a prime thing in that subjection. So the case is very often, as the Psalmist takes notice, Psalm, 36, (beginning,) The wickedness of the wicked saith in my heart, the fear of God is not before his eyes. His wickedness speaks in my heart, that he is one fearless of God, and who stands in no awe of him. So it is with many a man who professes somewhat of religion, that is, who doth not profess atheism, or rebellion against heaven; yet the wickedness of his course and practice is such as to speak in another man's heart, sure this man has no fear of God before his eyes. Now how absurd is this, to put on a covering and disguise, which doth not hide a man at all! The whole course of their lives proclaims them to be no other than earthly, carnal worldlings, while they pretend to be designing for heaven; for

every one who professes a relation to this kingdom, is understood to stand related not only to the inchoate but the consummate state of it, or the kingdom of heaven. But while they pretend themselves to do so, the pretence is easily to be seen through, and they who observe the ordinary course of their conversation, discourses and designs, easily see that they are mere compositions of earth; and unless you can suppose a clod of clay can be carried up into heaven, they are never like to come there. It is to be seen that they are men, as it were made of earth; and all their discourses, converses, actions, and designs smell of earth. It is therefore observable, that no man can make himself more ridiculous, than when he takes upon himself to act a part, to act it partially, and when he goes to personate another man to do it absurdly: why he had better have contented himself to have appeared only in his own likeness, and in his natural face and posture. Thus the case is with such hypocrites; they do, it may be, disguise themselves *quoad hoc,* as to this particular thing; but then they lay themselves open in something or other else. Just as if some vain person should mightily pride himself in some gay rich apparel, which he had thrown on upon some part of him; and all the other parts appeared clothed with nothing but rags, or exposed to view more shameful nakedness. How ridiculous should we account such a person! And

(4.) The pretence with many is an evanid thing, and soon vanishes away. And then how great is the absurdity to make myself be thought, if I could then succeed so far to be thought, such a one yesterday, and to-day discover myself to be quite another? They who pretend to be of this kingdom of God, and the appearance from whence they would gain to themselves, that estimate and reputation, being nothing that hath life in it; as not being born or connatural to the new creature; it will then soon be a withering and vanishing thing. As Job speaks of the hypocrite; Can a rush grow without mire? Job 8. 11. Can there be verdure and greenness, and fair appearance, and nothing at all to maintain it? A mere spider's web, such a thing is the best pretence of the hypocrite; why how soon is it swept away? It is very apparent that the living root being wanting, that which is merely external of a person's religion, will in tract of time become tiresome, and he will be very well content to throw it away himself, when he finds it to be for convenience. So we find Job speaking again concerning the hypocrite, chap. 27. 10. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? Will he always call upon God? That is, he will not be always religious; for calling upon God there, is only a synechdochal expression for religion in general. Will

he always call upon God? No surely; for he doth not delight himself in the Almighty, and hath not a temper of spirit suited to God; the habitual disposition of his soul is opposite and averse; God is one in whom he can take no pleasure; and then you may be sure he will not call upon him always; his religion will have an end, and he will soon grow weary. And how absurd a thing is it to make up, and wear a while a disguise, and have afterwards a kind of an unhappy necessity come upon me to have it made appear, I did but act a part, and no more? That is the first thing. But

2. It is without any valuable design. For what is there to be got by it for a man to pretend himself to be a loyal subject of God's kingdom, who never had his heart changed and renewed, and made suitable to the laws and constitutions of it? Why, certainly nothing worth designing whether you consider the matter with reference to God or man. In reference to man; him indeed you may deceive; but that is to no purpose. In reference to God, though that were to never so great a purpose, yet him you can never deceive. It is true you may deceive man; but what is to be got by it? What is the hope of a hypocrite though he gain, when God takes away his soul? Job 27. 8. Alas! what a pitiful little will the greatest gain dwindle into, when God comes to take away his soul? What is he the better for it then?

But as to God what rational design can a man form to himself, in reference to him, by pretending to be what in this case he is not?

(1.) It is plain he can never deceive God by that pretence. "Be not deceived, God is not mocked." You do but deceive yourselves, as if he had said, by attempting to deceive him. Every man shall reap as he sows; he who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; he who sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. 6. 8. You do but deceive yourselves, and not at all impose upon God, if being flesh you look for any better issue of things, than what is suitable to your state and temper; and if not being spiritual you have any expectations of that state of blessedness, which is only agreeable to such a temper. That puts the matter quite out of doubt, you cannot deceive God in the case. But

(2.) You will highly provoke him, even by an attempt of it, or admitting an imagination in your own hearts, that you can do it. For what higher an affront can we put upon the infinite and eternal God than to suppose him like one of the idol gods of the nations, who hath eyes to see, and sees not? Who would ever worship him as a deity, whom we think we could

impose upon by a lie, or a false appearance? Indeed there cannot be a greater absurdity, and no man can act more inconsistently with himself than at once to profess homage to an object; and think it possible at the same time to impose a cheat upon it. It is truly to deface my own act: I give him worship; that carries the face and appearance of very high thoughts which I have of him, and as if I took him for a very excellent being but to think to impose upon him by a piece of falsehood; that carries the appearance of the meanest and most despicable thoughts of him which can be imagined. And therefore we find with what severity the holy God speaks, in that case of any man, who does but say in his heart; I shall have peace, though he walks after the imaginations of his heart: my jealousy shall smoke against that man, Deut. 29. 19. 20. "What, will he take up such contemptuous thoughts of me? I will make him pay dear for that very thought, and my jealousy shall smoke against him."

(3.) By this attempt to impose upon the blessed God by false appearances, we bring in very pregnant convictive testimony against our own souls. Hypocrisy always does that. There is no man who plays the hypocrite, but that which he counterfeits, and whereof he puts on the appearance, he doth thereby proclaim it to be good, and valuable; otherwise why doth he imitate or counterfeit? People are not wont to put on a false appearances, to make themselves seem worse than they are, but to make themselves appear better: and their very practice in this thing carries this testimony with it against themselves, that they judge that to be better, and yet decline it. They judge that to be a good whereof they thought fit to clothe themselves with the shew; they practically acknowledge it to be a good, and thereby give a mighty testimony against themselves. Thou thoughtest it a good and desirable thing to be a christian; otherwise why didst thou seem one? to be sincere; otherwise why didst thou pretend to it? And if thou dost think so, why didst thou not aim to be such a one? Beside,

(4.) They hereby lose the opportunity which they might otherwise have had of becoming what they seemed to be. The moralist speaks about the business of wisdom, *Multi ad sapientiam pervervissent, nisi se ad sapientiam pervenisse putarant: many had attained to be wise, had they not thought themselves to be already so.* If they had not cozened themselves with the appearance of it, many might have come to have been sincere. And it is a miserable thing to please one's self with the shadow, all that time

wherein one should have been getting the substance, till the time is expired and gone.

But here now a question may perhaps arise, by some such person or other, who may fear himself not yet to be sincere, and may therefore say, "What am I to do in this case? while I think I am not sincere and while perhaps that really is my case? Am I to throw away all my profession? Or am I to profess enmity against God? Being not yet regenerate, and therefore not yet a subject, must I therefore profess myself a rebel?" It would be very easy to discover what is duty in this case, if we do but consider and fasten upon what is only faulty in it. Now wheresoever there is hypocrisy there must be some good wanting; and there must be the present appearance and semblance of that good which is wanting. Thus it is in the present case. This good is wanting, a real subjection of heart and spirit to the laws and constitutions of God's spiritual kingdom, which is only brought about by the new birth. Well, but here is the appearance of it too, else there could not be hypocrisy. Now let us consider where the fault lies in this case: the fault cannot lie simply in the appearance, but only as it is untrue; for there are true appearances, as well as false. The appearance therefore is upon no other account faulty, but as it is false; for if the good were there, whereof there is the appearance, the appearance would not only be lawful, but a duty. We are to hold forth the word of life, by which we have been made to live; as the apostle directs, Phil. 2. 16. Now therefore inasmuch as the fault here is, that while there is such an appearance, that good doth not *subesse*, there is not that good underneath which there ought to be; so the thing now to be done, is not to throw away the appearance, but to have the good supplied; that is in this case, to be restlessly intent to obtain that Spirit, and the vital influences and operations of it, by which that great transforming work may be done. And how great encouragement is there for this at his hand, who hath told us, that if earthly parents who are evil, will give good gifts to their children; bread rather than a stone; a fish rather than a scorpion; how much rather will our heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them who ask it? It is not because this Spirit is out of our power, and not at our command, that we have not the influences and operations of it, according to our need; but because we apprehend not, and will not admit the serious apprehension, of our need. It is a kind of contempt of this blessed Spirit that these pleasant vital influences are so little valued by creatures lost in darkness and death; that we rather content ourselves to be desolate, and seem careless whether we live or die for the

present; or are happy or miserable to all eternity. It is upon such accounts as these that the blessed Spirit, though the Author and Fountain of all love and goodness, and benignity, and sweetness, retires: and that resolution seems taken up, "My Spirit shall no longer strive." It is no wonder if it do not, when there is so little apprehension of our need of him, so little dependance upon him; so little craving and seeking and solicitude, whether it be an indweller in our souls, or no: as if the doctrine of the Holy Ghost were a strange and new thing to our ears; or we had not yet heard whether there was a Holy Ghost or no.

SERMON VIII.*

SEVERAL inferences have been recommended to you already, and others remain to be added. A fifth inference, is—that the depravation of man's nature in the state of apostacy is total.—Being born denotes a total production, and the thing produced is only somewhat substituted in the room of the nature depraved: and what was corrupted and what is substituted instead of it, must necessarily be commensurate and proportionable to one another. If a man should have a leg or arm perish; he would not say, the production of that arm was a being born; for being born, is the production of all the parts together, not of this or that single part alone. And hence it is that that which is corrupted, and that which is anew produced, are in Scripture spoken of under the name of a man; an old man, and a new man. The frame of graces, that impress of holiness, wherein the new creature doth consist, must be understood to be a whole entire body of graces; as the sins which meet together originally in the nature of man, are called by the name of the body of the sins of the flesh,

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which is to be destroyed; and elsewhere, the body of sin. It is therefore a forlorn miserable state that men are antecedently in, to their being born spirit of spirit. And it is of no small consequence, that it be distinctly understood, and sink into our hearts, that this depravation is total, and that we need to be made new throughout. As we have it in 2 Cor. 5. 17. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, and all things are become new. Where this is not understood, it is of most unhappy consequence in these two respects—men take not up right thoughts of the distressedness of their own case; and—by consequence they never apply themselves to the proper business of the redress of it.

I. They never take up right thoughts of the wretchedness of their own case. They understand neither the extent of it, nor wherein it doth especially consist. They understand not how extensive it is in a twofold respect, that is, to the subject disaffected, and the object whereunto they are disaffected. There is a twofold totality to be considered in this matter, both subjective, and objective. The subject is disaffected universally in every faculty; the mind, and judgment, and will, and conscience and affections, and executive powers; and by a kind of participation, the whole outward man. The apostle applying passages out of the Old Testament, runs over the several parts; Their throat is an open sepulchre, the poison of asps is under their lips, their feet make haste to shed blood, &c. Rom. 3. This is little apprehended by them who consider not the work to be wrought under the notion of a birth, which supposes the antecedent corruption, which always leads the way to generation, to have been universal and total.

And it is as little considered, that this disaffection, as it hath spread itself through the whole subject; so it refers to the whole object, which they ought to be otherwise affected to: that is, the whole law of God, or the entire sum of their duty. They make nothing of it, considered as a duty and enjoined by God, and whereby they pay a respect and homage to him; and indeed every act of duty should be in that regard an act of religion; and that religion is of no value, if this do not run through it, and is only the body and carcass of it, but not the soul and spirit. This is not understood, that in reference to every part of duty which is enjoined, there is a disaffection in the spirits of men, and they are to every good work reprobate: that is, they do not know how to make proof of themselves, or approve themselves in any work they undertake which is truly good; and cannot accordingly be approved of God in what they do or go about.

But besides that the extent of this wretched case is not un-

derstood by such as do not consider, that a total depravation is now befallen the nature of man; so that is waved and overlooked which is the special thing in respect both of the object and subject, wherein the misery of their case doth more principally lie: that is, in respect of the subject, the principal depravation is in the heart; in respect of the object, the principal is towards God himself. True it is indeed that by the corruption which hath spread itself through the world, men are become hateful to God, and haters of one another; very ill-tempered towards one another; but we may observe that men are a great deal more easily brought to civility, than religion; and are with much less ado, whatever their tempers and dispositions are, brought to be kind one to another, than to take up loyal and dutiful affections towards God, and deport themselves suitably towards him. Nothing is more plain than that this depravedness which is in the spirits of men, and which this begetting them of the Spirit is to cure, hath for its principal subject and seat, the heart; and for the principal object the blessed God. That is, the heart, as that doth contain within the compass of it, the judgment, will and affections of the soul; will by no means endure to be exercised about God. Notional thoughts men can tell how to employ about him, without any great trouble to themselves; they regret it not; but deeply to consider, and with a design to choose him as their God; to desire after him, to love him, and delight in him, and fear before him as such, therein the great disaffection of the spirit of a man towards God, doth especially discover itself. This men will not understand, while they apprehend not that the thing to be effected by regeneration, is to make them new at the heart; and to renew the heart principally towards God: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; renew a right spirit within me." When once that work is done, then this becomes the sense and posture of the soul; "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God." A renewed soul presently turns itself to God, and hath a biass put upon it, which inclines it towards him: "Whom have I in heaven, but thee? and there is none on earth I desire in comparison of thee." He is singled out as the one Good, in which the soul doth centre and rest; "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever:" that is, dwell in the divine presence, and be always nigh to God.

But this great disaffection of the heart towards God, is still overlooked by the generality of men, as if they did not need to be cured in this respect. And herein they are very much confirmed, because it is become so customary a thing never to make such kind of reflections upon themselves which may na-

turally and probably lead to the discovery of their case, in this regard. Men do not compare themselves with the rule, and what it requires the dispositions of men's spirits to God, should be. It summarily saith, "Love the Lord thy God with all thy soul, and all thy strength, and all thy mind." And they do not compare themselves with the examples of holy men; for such they cannot but read of, if they consult their Bibles; and such they may possibly sometimes converse with, who can say somewhat of the disposition of their spirits towards God; how pleasant it is to be conversant with him; how they can entertain themselves in solitude, and what a solace it is to a vacant and leisure hour, wherein they can be entirely taken up in conversing with God. They do not compare themselves with the rule, or with other holy men; but they compare themselves, as the apostle speaks, with themselves, (2 Cor. 10. 12.) and so they are not wise, or never come to understand themselves. They only compare themselves with themselves; and they find they agree with themselves well enough; that is, they are such to day, as they were yesterday; and this week as last; and this year, as the year before, and for many years past. They agree with themselves very well, and so only comparing themselves with themselves they never come to understand the case. And this is very natural for men to do, and not to compare themselves with any thing which will be a reproof to them, or look ill upon them. And indeed if they took measure of their own spirits by the rule or by another good and holy man; they would say, "Things are not so with me as they should be, and as with such and such it is." When I put myself upon a trial, I find I have no disposition of heart to love God; good thoughts of him are not at all delightful to me. But when they compare themselves with themselves, they can say, "I do not vary from myself; just such a temper of spirit as I had, I have." And so they think all is well, and never grow wise, or come to be instructed concerning the truth of their case. But if this great principle of truth could once obtain to be fixed in the minds of men, that there hath been a total depravation, and their whole souls are disaffected to the whole of their duty; and especially towards God, and all that duty which more immediately terminates on him; they would have quite other thoughts concerning the distressedness of their case, than is common with them. And it is of ill consequence that so plain and great a truth as this is overlooked.

II. Hence also they apprehend not wherein their redress must lie. They are apt either to think that some partial reformation is sufficient, and if they are reformed a little in this or that particular thing, then matters will be right and good,

and will be well with them. If the drunkard take up and become sober, he thinks concerning himself, that he is a new man. If an unjust person admit a conviction, or it may be, is taught a little prudence by observing how much any thing of that kind reflects upon his reputation, and so he orders his affairs with more exactness; he is ready to look upon himself as regenerate. But if it were considered that there must be a being born, and that I am in a total corruption; surely another cure would be thought of than that, and it would appear no more proportionable to the case, than a man whose body was all over leprous, and full of sores, would acquiesce in the cure of a slight scratch in his little finger.

And as they apprehend such a partial reformation sufficient, so they apprehend too from hence, that a vital principle is unnecessary. It is very true indeed, that with only some partial maim, a principle of life may consist, but a universal corruption imports death. If the case were therefore understood aright, men would see it necessary in order to their cure, that they should be made alive, and a principle of life put into them; which a total depravation speaks to be absent. They would never think themselves well till then, and would find that as they are alienated from the life of God; so their business was to be made alive to God, and to Jesus Christ, as those who have been dead. But again,

The sixth inference is,—since in order to any one's partaking of God's kingdom, he must be born spirit of spirit, we infer further, that whosoever becomes truly and sincerely religious, a new creature is transmitted and communicated to him.—This being not understood, it is all a man's business, to contrive and form for himself an artificial religion; and there are several sad consequences ensue thereupon. As

I. Men attempt to perform what is proper to the divine life, without it. The actions of the divine life which are visible to men, carry a kind of amiableness in them, in the common consciences of men and they attempt those actions which are done from a principle of life, without considering, that to be sincerely religious, is to have a new nature. They think to do these actions without that life; just as he who is observed in story, to have attempted the setting up of a carcass of one newly dead; he would fain have it stand in the posture of a living body, but how to make it stand so he knew not. The head falls one way, and the hands another, and the legs tremble under it, at last he cries out, "*Deest aliquid intus, there wants something within.*" Just so do men busy themselves to make an artificial frame, which is indeed a dead carcass of

religion; they cannot tell how to inspirit it, and it will upon no terms do, but hang and waver this way, and that, And hence therefore,

II. All the actions of religion become exceedingly grievous and irksome, and no pleasure is taken in them. You know it is a very easy thing for a man to move to and fro his own living body, where he will; pass into a speedy or slower motion, as he sees cause, without any considerable pain or difficulty: But it would be a very tedious thing to move to and fro a dead carcass; that would put him to greater pain. Here lies the difference between these two sorts of men; a man truly religious, and who therefore hath a new nature communicated to him, (as there is where any are begotten,) and other men. When any do not consider this, their business is to make up an external frame of religion, and to act and move and carry it to and fro with them; and that is alike burdensome as for a living man to move to and fro a dead carcass. But to one who is truly and spiritually alive, his new nature which is communicated to him, doth in a natural way, animate the frame of religion, in which he is to act; so that the actions of it are easy and light, as all the acts of nature are.

III. Hence it is, that they are so manifestly defective imitations of religion. Their attempts and essays to do like religious men, have notorious and observable flaws in them, because they do not consider, there must be given a new nature, before I become truly religious. Some think it is only to do as men are taught, or only as a piece of art. And when we go to imitate only a natural action there will be some very observable flaw and defect; some visible disparity in the attempt; as if you should make a puppet act just like a living child, the difference would be soon discovered. And hence,

IV. Religion comes to be given over. Whereas where it ever comes to be taken up as an artificial thing, it is taken upon design of some present advantage and convenience; therefore if the inconveniences which shall come to you thereby be greater by continuing it, than laying it aside; the reason why it was taken up being vanished, itself must needs cease. If the conveniences are not greater in a course of religion, than the inconveniences they sought to avoid, the religion itself must needs cease of course; and so it commonly doth. But where religion is in a man as a nature, it cannot do so. I can easily lay aside my cloak, but not my flesh which is vitally united with me, and is one thing with me, by a principle of life which runs through me. It is therefore of great concernment truly and thoroughly to understand this, that wherever any become truly religious, a new nature is communicated.

Being taught only signifies the acquisitions of art; but being born, and principled and constituted of such a complexion; signifies a stayed invariable principle of those actions which proceed from it.

A seventh inference is—That the constitution of God's kingdom must needs be spiritual; for men are born into it spirit of spirit,—It hath been a great modern controversy, as well as an ancient one, among philosophers, whether the constitution of the universe is of *primordia*, which are mechanical, or spermetical and vital. It is a dangerous thing when this comes to be a matter of doubt in religion, whether the constitution of this divine kingdom is mechanical, or vital. According as the greater part of men practise, and as their habitual temper is, it seems as if it were thought that christianity is nothing else but a piece of mechanism. But certainly if you are born into this kingdom, as they who come truly into it spirit of spirit; then the constitution of this kingdom is not mechanical, or an artificial contexture of things; but a frame of things which doth in a spiritually-natural way, grow up towards that pitch it is designed to; and is that spirit of life which doth diffuse itself through all the mystical body of Christ; which makes the connection between part and part, and keeps the body entire and firm to itself, and makes it a consistent and stable thing. And hereupon it must needs be consequent

I. That whatever there is of disagreement among christians, who are the living members of this kingdom and body; it must needs be unnatural. The reason is, that all who are of this kingdom and truly belonging to it; are born into it, and in that birth partake of one and the same nature, by which they are connaturalized to one another, and to their common Lord and Head: He who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one, (Heb. 2. 11.) or make one entire piece. Wherefore now what there is of disagreement among christians, must needs be preternatural, and beside nature. And hence it is consequent, that it must needs proceed from ill designs; that is from the devil and his instruments, who make it their business what they can, to act persons diversly; when if these things be left to their natural course, and the new nature in men is permitted to act undisturbedly, and according to its genuine tendency; it would all run one way. It is needful to be well aware of this, whatever there is of disagreement is accidental to it, and certainly proceeds from a foreign enemy, and somewhat without it, which sets such things on foot, and keeps them on foot, with an ill design towards this kingdom. If the new nature did run its course, and were not accidentally disturbed, by what is not of the constitution of this kingdom, it

would certainly run the same way. It is one thing to say what is the constitution of the persons; and another, what is the constitution of them as members of this kingdom and born into it. The corruption of their own hearts, is extrinsical to the constitution of this kingdom; for it is only so far as they are new born that they are members of this kingdom. The sphere and verge of this kingdom, doth properly and directly take in only the spiritual part. It is a sphere of spirituality; and what there is in it opposite thereunto, is alien to the constitution of it, and doth not belong to it. It is a great thing to be well possessed with this apprehension, that the great enemy of this kingdom, does certainly foment whatever there is of disagreement among them who are born the vital members of it; and it must be understood to proceed from an ill design. And

II. It must argue an evil state, and the prevalency of a contrary principle. If there be divisions among you, are you not carnal? 1 Cor. 3. 3. They who are of this kingdom are spiritual; they are born into it spirit of spirit; so they came into it. Therefore so far as there is a prevailing disagreement and dividedness in the state of things in the church of Christ; so far the persons who are of that state are in a decay, and lapsed into carnality, and things grow worse and worse, as the church grows more divided. That spiritual principle which agrees to every member of this kingdom, as he is born into it, drives all to oneness. It proceeds from God, and tends to him; all are children of the same Father, and they are all begotten to one and the same great and lively hope of an eternal and undefiled inheritance. The *primordia* of the new creature necessarily leads to unity, among all who are of this kingdom.

III. Where there is any departure from this said oneness, there is so much of the decay of the spiritual nature, by the communication whereof men are said to be born into this kingdom. So much disunion as there is, so much carnality; and the church is then in a languishing state spiritually, when it is in a divided state. The not considering this is attended with a double mischief very obvious; that is, that in different respects, the differences and disagreements among christians, are thought greater and less, than indeed they are. They are thought greater than they are, because it is not considered how the nature which is every where communicated among the true members of this kingdom, doth make them substantially one, in the great and main and more principal things. There is a greater stress put upon the differences of those who are christians indeed, than there ought, or can be; in comparison of the small things wherein they differ. And they very much

mistake who think them to be great; for they necessarily agree in one common, new, spiritual, divine nature, and principle of life: and it is impossible they should disagree in any one thing, comparatively to so great a thing as this. Whatsoever other differences there are, they are comparatively little, in respect of their agreement in this. They cannot differ so but they are all one in Christ Jesus; whoever is in Christ is a new creature: they all come in him under one mould and stamp by their new creation.

But then in another respect the difference is thought a great deal less than indeed it is among christians. Consider christians who are truly and sincerely such, and so the difference cannot be so great as many times it is thought; but then consider the difference between those who are christians in truth, and those who are only so by profession; and there the difference, for the same reason, must be greater than it is commonly thought to be; for there the difference is between a living thing and a dead; as much as between a piece of nature and art; a man and a statue. So that it is a very vain kind of confidence which such pretend to, who because they have made a shift to imitate and resemble a christian; they think the case is well with them, when as yet they may as much differ from them whose case is truly good, as a living man doth from a dead carcass.

The eighth inference is this—that love to God cannot but be characteristical to every regenerate person—For every such a one is a child of God, and born of him; and certainly it ought to be looked upon, as the property of a child, to love the Father. If you love him who begat; that is supposed and taken for granted, as a thing not to be doubted. 1 John 5. 1. And therefore to have a heart destitute of the love of God, and having no love to him, is a most unreasonable and unnatural thing; and a certain argument, that one is not his child, and hath not been born spirit of spirit. It is very true there may be so great a degeneration in the old decayed nature of man; but in the new nature, there can never be such a degeneration, as that a person born of God should not love him. It would be the greatest inconsistency imaginable; and therefore a certain argument, that such were none of God's children. For though it is very true indeed, as it is commonly observed, that love doth descend, more than ascend; from him who begets, to them who are begotten: so love in this case more especially doth a great deal more descend from God to them who are born of him; than ascend from them to him. But though it descends a great deal more, yet it doth really and truly ascend to him; though not indeed so much. There is nothing more connatural to the new creature than the love of

God. The very heart and soul of the new creature is love to him primarily, and therein lies the end of the new creation, to form a person to God. "God is love," and every soul who is begotten anew by him, is turned into a like nature, and becomes love, as God is love. "He who dwells in love, dwells in God, for God is love." There cannot but be a love-commerce, more or less, between God, and every new-born soul. As the true mother in that great proof of Solomon's wisdom, was distinguished by her love to her child; so we may proportionably say, that a child of God is distinguished by that love which works towards God. We find some whom it never toucheth to have God dishonoured and disgraced; but it goes to the heart of a true child of God, when his Father is struck at, his name reproached and torn, or any thing done against his interest.

The ninth inference,—How great is the obligation upon all the regenerate to the love of one another. If you love God, how can it be but you must have a love for them who love God; who have all one parent, all partake of one and the same nature, all expecting the same inheritance; who have one and the same spirit, the same hope and calling? Upon the consideration of their being new-born, it is evident they must have the same Father and inheritance: If children, then heirs; and joint-heirs with one another, as well as, with Christ, Rom. 8. 17. And every one who loveth him who begat, loveth him also who is begotten of him. By this we know that we love the children of God, &c.

We further infer, tenthly—That the reason is evident, why the proper means of their regeneration, or spiritual birth, are very dear to renewed souls. There is a spiritually-natural reason for it. There are those in the world, who cannot believe otherwise, but it must be folly and fanaticism; or a mere humour and affectation, that any should discover that love to the word of the gospel, or the ministry of the gospel, which they do. But if men would consider this, it would give them a natural account of this love. For is it not natural to love the means by which even my very nature itself hath been communicated to me, and by which I am what I am? The apostle gives us the reason why we should love the word; As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby, (1Pet. 2. 2.) that is, as those who by it are new-born. It is a violence to the new nature of the children of God, to withhold from them the word of the gospel, and the ministry of it which hath been instrumental to their new birth; and cannot but infer pain and anguish, to be abridged and deprived of what was so conducive to their spiritual beings.

The last inference, we collect,—That this same kingdom and

church of God, which is truly and really so, must needs be a growing thing. All who are of it are born into it, and so become as it were naturally subjects; there is a new nature communicated to all who are in it; and therefore it being made up of the spiritual nature and life, will grow, till it comes to its maturity. Never fear but it will grow, behold it never so languishing; never so assaulted, struck at, and contested against. For all who are born into it consist of spirit and life; and therefore it is impossible, but it must become a mature thing, worthy both of the great Author and Founder of it; and of the great design for which he formed it; namely, that he might have a people to be eternally governed by a placid, gentle empire, and a delightful, easy sway; who should be ruled by a beck and a nod; and to whom every intimation of his will, should have the force of a perfect command, without any the least regret; and that all the subjects of this kingdom, should partake in the glory of it. And so it will be a living kingdom, and will be a growing thing, till it come to that glorious maturity, which will answer both the greatness of the Undertaker, and the excellency of the design, for which this new nature and life was given to it.

SERMON IX.*

Gal. v. 25.

If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.

IN asserting the office of the Holy Ghost, or that work which it hath undertaken, in reference to the spirits of men; we have already spoken of one great act of that office; that is, the regenerating, and begetting anew of souls into God's kingdom; spirit of spirit. We have now two other acts before us in these words; that is, its maintaining the life, and causing all the right motion of regenerate souls. The former of these are contained in the supposition; "If we live in the Spirit:" the latter is intimated in the inferred precept; "Let us walk in the Spirit." Both are alike imputed to the Spirit of God here, and it is represented as the very element of life, and the spring of all holy motion to renewed souls; which fills the whole region, as it were, with *vitality*, in which they converse, and draw their continual breath. The case is in this respect, much like in the new creation, as in the old, and in the sphere of grace, as in that of nature. It is said concerning the natural world, that it doth, as it were, subsist in God; and it is spoken of the new creation here; and both in one

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form of expression: In him we live, and move, and have our being, Acts 17. 28. And here we read of living in the Spirit; and walking or moving in the Spirit. There is only this difference in the form of expression: that whereas we have three distinct phrases used to set forth the dependance of the natural creation upon God;—living and moving and having being in him;—there are only the two former used here in reference to the new creation, living and moving; living in the Spirit, and walking in the Spirit. The reason of the difference is obvious, that we have in reference to the former, that superadded expression, "and have our being;" because in this natural, material, sensible world, there are many things which *are*, that do not *live*: but with the new creation it is not so; here, to *live* and to *be*, are one and the same thing; and it is entirely and wholly a being of life. A collection of all vital principles compose and make it up what it is; and there is nothing in the new creation concerning which it can be said, it *is*, but lives not: for it is all life throughout. And as philosophy has been wont to teach, even modern philosophy itself, that creation and conservation are not diverse acts, but the latter only the former continued; and that God doth by the continual communication of the same influence, by which he created and made this world, keep it in the state wherein it is, that it doth relapse back into its old nothing; that there would not need a positive act of God to destroy the world, if he would turn all things to nothing again, but only to suspend and withhold the influence by which every thing comes to be what it is; so it is in the new creation or in the new creature, too. The very suspension of that influence by which it began to be, or to live (which is all one) must certainly infer the failure and extinction of the whole.

Think therefore what it would be if all vital influence were suspended and withheld on a sudden from this material and sensible world in which we converse. You might hereupon frame the apprehension within yourselves of the face of the earth all in a sudden bestrewed with the dead carcasses of men and beasts, the beauty and pleasant verdure of it all vanished and gone, and nothing left in time but a great clod of dirt! This great temple of the Deity which he inhabits by a vital presence, that diffuses life up and down every where, all turned into a ruinous heap. If I say, there were a suspension of vital influence, supposing an influence continued by which this material world should still be. Why, so it must be, proportionably in reference unto the new creature too. There is the *substratum* to be considered, which is a part of the natural creation, the soul or the man himself; but, that vital influ-

ence being suspended by which the new creature was made to be what it was, there is nothing left but a dead man, a dead soul! The temple of the Holy Ghost (as we must suppose it to have been, beautified and adorned with the divine image on every side, in every part) laid waste and desolate! Nothing now but darkness and confusion, and misery and death, there where God dwelt! So the case would be, if we could suppose such a thing as the suspension of that influence, by which the life of the new creature first began to spring up.

And there is not only a parity in the cases, but in some respects, a sameness. For we must know that all divine influence is in one respect, that is, *ex parte principii*, one and the same, and only differs, or is diversified *ex parte termini*, according as it doth terminate. We cannot conceive the divine influences to be distinguished in their Fountain, that is, in the divine Being itself the Almighty Spirit, whence all proceeds and flows out. That Almighty Spirit, if you consider the operations of it, produces divers, but by an influence that is radically and in the Fountain one and the same. As in reference to those diversities of its operations that were performed to the church; as divers as they were, they were all wrought by one and the same Spirit. The spirit of prophecy was not one spirit, and of healing another, and of tongues another, but one and the same Spirit did thus diversify its operations, according as the products were divers which were caused by it, and which it was afterwards to continue in that being which it gave. To suppose a difference or diversity of influence in the Fountain itself, the divine Being, were to suppose God to differ from himself, and to put somewhat in God that were not God; a thing most repugnant to the simplicity of the divine Being. But the divine influences may be diversified terminatively, according to the subjects in which it is received. Nature is various in this, and that, and the other creature (speaking of the *natura naturata*; as for distinction's sake, it is wont to be called) and the influences are diversified according to those diverse natures in which they terminate; and according to the different purposes which the exigency of those natures doth require should be served and complied with. And so that influence, which originally and in the Fountain is one and the same, according as it goes forth to beget and continue a variety of productions of this, or that, or another kind, is an influence that gives and that preserves being to things concerning which it can only be said, they *are*; it is a *vital* influence to things that *live*; it is a *motive* influence to things that *move*; it is an *intellectual* influence to things that are capable of *understanding*; it is a *holy* influence unto what is *holy*, to what

it hath made holy, and is to continue and keep so; it is *light*, as it terminates in light; and *love*, as it terminates in love; and *power*, as it terminates in power; and holy gracious *action* as it doth terminate in such actions.

But it is the principle of such actions, the subordinate principle, here signified by the name of life, or included in living, that we are now to speak of; and we shall speak of the action which proceeds from that life, and shew how that hath rise also from the Spirit, when we come to the latter part of the text. From the former part the truth that we have to observe you may take thus—The blessed Spirit of God doth continue and maintain that life; whereof it hath been the Author, in every renewed soul.—We shall in speaking to this,—Very briefly open the words to you, that we may clear the ground which the truth recommended to you hath in the text, and—Shall next give you some account of the thing which is asserted therein.

I. As to the former, you must take notice,

1. That the *if* in the beginning of the text is not an *if* of dubitation, but of argumentation—"If ye live in the Spirit."—The apostle does not say so as doubting, nor was his design to signify that he had a doubt whether they did so, yea, or no; but supposing or taking that for granted, it is only a form used by him (as it is common in arguing hypothetically) thereupon to reason with them from such a supposed principle. The *if* therefore signifies as much as whereas, or since: since or inasmuch as ye live in the Spirit, therefore walk in the Spirit. As in Col. 3. 1. If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above: If ye be, that is, "Since ye are; it is the appearance which as professing christians ye make, the aspect which ye visibly hold forth to men, namely, that of persons united with Christ, and made alive by him; since ye are risen with Christ, therefore set your affections on things above; act and do accordingly." So we are to take it here, and it affords us a clear ground for a positive assertion, those who are christians indeed do live in the Spirit.

2. We must note, that to live cannot reasonably be understood as intending the first reception of the principle of life, but the continuation of that principle. This form of expression, namely, by the present tense, is commonly used to hold forth to us the continuedness of any thing; when we do not say such a thing was, or such a thing will be; but such a thing is, it notes, I say, the continuedness of the thing spoken of; inasmuch as the present time is that which doth connect and continue the two parts of time, namely, the past and the future. And the continued state of this life is after the same manner expressed by the apostle in the—chapter of this epistle

to the Galatians verse 20. The life which I live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God, he means not, that he only first began to live that life by an influence received from the Son of God, but that he lived from day to day that life which he did live, that spiritual, divine life, by faith in the Son of God, who had loved him and given himself for him.

Nor again must we understand this living to signify the series of actions only proper to that life: for they are afterwards signified by the name of walking in the other part of the text. It is true indeed, that living in a very common notion of it, does denote the continued series of the actions of one's life, whether good, or bad, both in Scripture and in ordinary language: If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die, (Rom. 8. 13.) that is, if ye continue to act, or walk, or converse after the flesh, according as that corrupt principle doth incline and dictate, ye shall die. The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that—we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world; that is, act and walk and converse so. Titus 2. 11, 12. And in common speech we use to say such a man lives a good or a bad life, intending by living, the course of his actions whether good or bad. But this cannot be the meaning of living here for the reason before mentioned; and should we so understand it, there would neither be argument, nor indeed congruity in the apostle's way of expressing himself; for it would amount to no more than this: If ye continue to live in the Spirit, continue to live in the Spirit; or if ye continue to walk in the Spirit, continue to walk in the Spirit. Wherefore it is necessary that we conceive a middle sense between these two, namely, the first reception of the principle of life, and the continued series of the actions of that life; and that middle sense is, (as hath been already intimated) the continuation of the vital principle itself. If ye live, that is, if ye have the principle of a new and divine life continued and maintained in you, walk in the Spirit as those principles would direct and guide you to do. Again

3. We must note that by Spirit, or the Spirit, is manifestly meant the blessed eternal Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost. It cannot be meant of our natural spirit as is most evident: nor can it be meant of the new creature itself, which is in the Scripture called spirits; (as we have had occasion lately to take notice again and again) for of the same Spirit which is here spoken of you have an enumeration of the fruits in the verses immediately foregoing: The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, meekness, temperance, &c. These we are sure, are not the fruits of our own natural spirit; neither can they be said to be

the fruits of the new creature, for they are the new creature itself, those very principles whereof the new creature is composed and doth consist. It is therefore manifest that by the Spirit we must understand the divine eternal Spirit, the blessed Spirit of God itself.

And for that form of expression "in the Spirit," that particle, commonly denotes a causative influence, and signifies as much as *by*; as though he had said, If ye live by the Spirit. Many instances might be given, and have upon some other occasion been given, to shew that the particle *in*, doth sometimes signify *by*, and denotes the influence of an efficient cause. But then it must be noted too, that it denotes the part of an efficient cause, or, a causal influence with a great deal more emphasis than if another form of expression had been used. "If ye live in the Spirit:" Why it imports the continual vital immediate presence of the Spirit for this purpose, to maintain this life. "If ye live in the Spirit:" as if the soul had its very *situs*, its situation in a region of life which the Spirit did create and make unto it. As sometimes the continual present power, and dominion and influence of wickedness, or some wicked principle, is expressed the same way, by being in the flesh. When we were in the flesh, under the power and regnancy of any corrupt, fleshly principle, the motions of sin which were by the law did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. Rom. 7. 5. And, Thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity, as it is said to Simon Magus. Acts 8. 23. And, The world lies in wickedness: so as to be continually receiving in and imbibing wickedness, as it were on every hand. 1 John 5. 19. In like manner the soul is represented as imbibing life and vital influence on every part; agreeably unto which notion, some (and those I may reckon the best of) philosophers have been wont to say, that it is a great deal more proper to speak of the body of a man as being in his soul, than of the soul, as in the body; that the body is in the soul, as being continually clothed with vital influence on every part, and which it diffuses throughout, the soul being as an element of life unto the body all the while they do converse, life extending even unto all the extremities, unto the most extreme part of the body that you can suppose. So is the soul spoken of here in reference to the Spirit of God; though that very intimate union is frequently held forth to us in Scripture by a kind of reciprocal and mutual in-being of one in the other, and the other in that. "He that dwells in love, dwells in God, and God in him;" they do, as it were, inhabit one another. So it is with the Spirit of God and the soul that spiritually lives by it; it is in the Spirit, and the Spirit is in it. It is not so in

the Spirit, as if there were any thing of itself, more intimate to it than the Spirit is; but the Spirit doth as it were clothe it with life, fill it with life, and is all in all of life to it.

So much therefore is now clear to you, that the truth which we have observed hath a very adequate ground in the text. "If ye live in the Spirit," since ye do so. It is a thing to be concluded, that the life of those who are christians indeed, who have ever come to be spiritually alive, is to be maintained and continued by a constant influence of the blessed Spirit.

II. Now that we may open the truth of the thing that is asserted and contained in these words, it will be requisite to speak distinctly,—concerning the life that is to be maintained, and—concerning the influence that maintains it.

1. Concerning the life to be maintained. Of that I have need to say the less because we have had occasion to speak largely of it heretofore. What it will be needful to say, you may take in these few propositions.

(1.) We are not to understand it of natural life, no, not even of the soul itself; but we are to understand it of life in a moral sense, or if you will in a spiritual and divine; I intend one thing by the expressions. It is called indeed the divine life, or the life of God in plain terms, Eph. 4. 18. Being alienated from the life of God, having no share, no participation in the divine life, in God's life.

(2.) As life in the natural sense is a principle of action; so life in the moral sense is a principle of *right* action, or by which one is enabled to act aright. The soul of a man is naturally a living, vital, active being, it is naturally so, that is, it belongs to its very essence to be capable of acting. But to be disposed to act aright, though that was in some respect natural to it too, yet it was not inseparable, as sad experience has taught us all. Though the spirit of a man be a living, and consequently an active being, made such by God in the first constitution of it, it is not to be supposed that he turned such a being as this loose into the world, when he made it, to act at random and according as any natural inclination might carry it, or external objects move it, this way or that; but it being not only a living, an active substance, but intellectual also, and thereby capable of government by a law, that is, of understanding its Maker's will and pleasure, and directing the course of its actions agreeably thereto, God hath thereupon thought fit to prescribe it a law, or set it rules to act and walk by. Now the mere power to act is life natural, but the disposition or ability to act aright is a supervening life, by which the soul is as it were contempered and framed agreeably to the

law by which it is to act, or the divine government under which it is placed.

(3.) The prime and fundamental law which enters the constitution of the divine government over reasonable creatures is, that they love the Author of their beings, his own blessed self, above all things; and consequently as that love doth dictate most directly, that they be devoted and subject unto him as the supreme authority, and that they delight and take complacency, and seek rest and blessedness in him as the supreme good; both which are included in that one root or principle of love. I am to love him, and love him above all, and then I do of course willingly and with cheerfulness devote myself to him, being acted by the power of that love so to do, and seek blessedness in him as the most suitable, the most agreeable good to my soul.

This is but the very sum and substance of the first commandment, which we are to look upon as fundamental to all the rest: for it were a vain thing to prescribe any farther laws as a God to those who will not take him for a God to them.

This was therefore the natural method to begin the law, the frame of laws and constitution of government, over reasonable creatures with this grand precept, "Thou shalt have no other God but me." That is, "I will be to thee the prime object of thy love, which love shall make thee devote thyself to me, and then make thee delight and take complacency in me as the supreme, both authority and goodness." Wherefore,

(4.) This life which we are now to consider as to be maintained, must principally and chiefly consist in the love of God; that is, a propension of soul towards him above and beyond all things else. It is a conformity unto that grand precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength;" a direction or bent of spirit towards God. So long, or so far a person is said to live spiritually, as the main bent of his heart is toward God. If he fall from God, or in what degree soever he doth so fall, so far he dies; there is a gradual death according to all the gradual declensions of the heart from God. God is the great term of this life, as we have had occasion to inculcate formerly. When it is intended to be spoken of, it is not spoken of as an absolute thing, but is distinctly spoken of as a life that relates and refers to God. Alive to God, (Rom. vi. 11.) and it follows, ver. 13, Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, yield yourselves living souls unto God. And the apostle speaking of that life, which he says he did live by faith in the Son of God; (Gal. ii.) speaks of it as a life terminating upon God, "I through the law am dead unto the law

that I might live unto God, ver. 19, in the next verse to which you read, "The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," it is a life that comes to me from and through Christ, and points my soul directly upon God, so as that I live to him.

(5.) This life doth also comprehend all other gracious principles beside that great radical one of love to God, which suit the spirit of a man to all the other parts of the divine law, or all the other laws besides. Whatsoever gracious habit or disposition doth attemper and reconcile my spirit to this or that part of the divine will revealed in his law, that I must understand to be a principle included within the compass of this life to be maintained. For we find the expression used to signify the impress of the whole frame of holiness upon the soul; it is but a diverse expression of the work of the new creature, which we find expressed again and again in Scripture by putting the law in men's hearts. To put the law into the heart, why, that is to form the new creature there, and so continue that impression upon the heart and maintain it there, or to continue the life of the new creature in the soul. Whence therefore that law so impressed and made habitual in the spirit of a man is called the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, Rom. 8. 2. And hence also those fruits of the Spirit which we find mentioned in this chapter and immediately before the text, are to be conceived as so many vital principles all belonging to the constitution of the new creature, and all of them serving to conform the spirit of a man unto the divine law. After the mention of all those several principles which are called the fruits of the Spirit, it is said, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit," that is, if we have all these fruits which are so many living principles put by the Spirit of God into us, if we have them, and they are continued and kept alive in us; then let us walk in the Spirit; act and do according to these principles.

(6.) We must farther note, that not only the continued being of all those vital principles which are called the fruits of the Spirit, but also the gradual improvements of their life, vigour, liveliness do all belong unto this life considered according to the more perfect state of it. For there is no degree of this or that thing, but hath the nature of the thing in it, and doth belong to the nature of the thing. And therefore I say, that by life here we must understand not barely the being of these principles continued in the soul, but supposing that the soul hath been improved and grown unto some strength and vigour, whatsoever maintenance it is to expect of that good state unto which it is arrived, that is under the name of life, here attri-

buted to the Spirit, as it is its proper work to hold the soul in life; according as we use to say, speaking concerning the natural life, *non vivere, sed valere vita est*, merely not to be dead, is hardly worth the name of living; but to be in health, to be strong, and lively and vigorous. We must conceive it to be within the compass of the Spirit's work, and therefore we put it within the compass of the object to keep up souls in a lively and vigorous state, and not only having put vital influences into them, merely to preserve them from being extinct. When we find that severe animadversion, Rev. 3. 1. Thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead, it appears by what follows that he doth not mean by death there, simple death, as if there was nothing of life left, but a gradual deadness, a very languishing state; for it follows, "Strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die," (ver. 2.) implying that to live so languid a life was hardly worth the name of living; they were rather to be called dead, than living, while the case was only so with them. Therefore though it be true, that such a languishing is that which doth befall many a christian who hath the *root* of life in him, yet if it be better with any, and if they be continued in a better state, it is to be attributed to the Spirit of God; they "live in the Spirit." If they live more prosperously, if their souls flourish, and are in a good condition, and are kept on therein, it is all owing to this Spirit; but it is owing to men's ownselves if they be in languishings and decays, that they conform not themselves to the rules and methods of the Holy Ghost in which they are to expect, and according to which they may look for its supplies, whereof we shall have occasion hereafter to speak.

(7.) This life must be understood to include too, not only the principles of grace, and the vigour and liveliness of those principles; but also the consolations, the pleasures, the grateful relishes of divine and spiritual things which are proper to the new creature also. For it is usual to distinguish both of the life of grace, and the life of comfort, as comprehended under the same name of life in the general. We many times find the expression used to hold forth to us any consolation that a good soul hath given into it upon whatsoever spiritual account. We live, says the apostle, if ye stand fast in the Lord, 1 Thes. 3. 8. It is as a new life to us, a revival upon a distinct and superadded account, unto whatsoever doth more naturally and necessarily concern the very being of our life. And therefore according to what measures and degrees such pleasures, and consolations, and joys are afforded unto good souls; we must understand them all attributed unto the Spirit

of God, under the expression of our living in the Spirit, or living by it.

(8.) As the tendency of this life is towards God as the term of it, so the root of it is from God, as the great Author and Fountain of it. It must be understood to be the life of God, or the divine life, upon both these accounts, not only as it is a life that terminates upon him, but as it is a life that rises and springs from him, even in the very first rise of it: for none can tend towards God but by him, by a power and inclination that is received from him, by which he draws and acts the soul towards himself. As was noted before, that very life by which the apostle says he did live to God, he says he received it by faith from the Son of God, who had loved him, and given himself for him. And therefore,

(9.) This life doth necessarily suppose union with God, with Christ and with the Spirit of God. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, 1 Cor 6. 17. Whosoever it is that is joined to the Lord, is caught into a union of spirit with him, and that Spirit is the continual source of life to him. It is not only vain and unintelligible, but most monstrously blasphemous to imagine such a thing concerning this union as if it were an essential union with God, or a personal union with any of the persons in the Godhead: the former would make any one God; the latter would make us more one with that person, than the persons are with one another; for we cannot say that the person of the Father is the person of the Son, or that the person of the Son is the person of the Holy Ghost, the union is in essence, not in person. And therefore to talk as some have done of being personally united to Christ, or with the Spirit of Christ, imports as if they were more one with Christ, than Christ is one with the Father, or than the Father is one with the Spirit; for personal union is that, the result whereof is one person; and so the two natures of Christ are united. But a real union there is of those, who live this divine life, with him who is the great origin and principal of it; for it were a most unreasonable and unintelligible thing, that a man should live by a principle of life that is disunited from him. There must always be a union between the thing which lives, and that which it lives by. I cannot live by a vital principle that is remote from me, or wherewith I am not, in one sense or another, united. And it were very absurd to think that such words should be put into the Bible to signify nothing, or carry no sense with them, "He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit." Nor can that union, though it doth not signify so much as an essential, or a personal union (both which as I have said to you, are absurd and blasphemous) carry

so little as a mere presence of God, for he is equally present to all, more intimate to every creature than it is to itself; but it doth over and beside carry this, that there is a divine presence specified by such ends, for which it is vouchsafed upon such peculiar terms, upon which such a presence is not vouchsafed to others; that is, he is present to them with whom he is thus united, as a spring and principle of life to them; he is present for this very purpose, to form them for himself, to incline, and to continue their souls inclined towards himself, and so more and more gradually, to dispose and fit them to glorify him, to be the instruments of his glory and to be glorified with him, or to be the subjects of his glory; this is the special end for which he is present, and which doth distinguish his presence. For we cannot (as was said before) suppose that *ex parte Dei*, on God's part, one part of himself can be more present than another, for that were to make God to differ from himself; but, with reference to the effects and ends, which such an influential presence doth work, there is a difference; he is present so, as to do such a work in those, to whom he is thus present, as he will not, as he doth not do in others; so as to be the continual spring of such motions, and, such workings and tendencies, as others, where he will not so exert his influence, are strangers to. And then he is present with them too upon terms suitable to those ends; that is, as having bound himself to them to be their God, and so to be all that to them which it belongs to him to be, as he undertakes to be the God of any. He is their God, engaged to be with them by his continual vital presence through time, and in all eternity. Such a union, that is, an intimate presence for such purposes, and upon such terms, is supposed in this life, and therefore must be supposed to be maintained and continued all the while this life is continued; that is, the soul is held with God and kept close to him by bonds of union, kept firm and tight between him and them.

Thus you have some account of the first of these heads which we proposed to open to you, namely, the life to be maintained. It would become us to make some present reflection upon what hath been said at this time; and that is, since we have heard so much said concerning such a life as this, (and more heretofore) "certainly there is such a life." The thought offers itself, that such a life is not merely talked on, or is not a mere empty notion, but there must certainly be such a real thing. This distinct sort of life, though besides what other kinds of life are more obvious to the common notice of the world, is indeed a hidden life, a secret life, your life is hid with Christ in God, Col. 3. 3. But the hiddenness of the

thing doth suppose it to be, for that which is not, cannot be hid; so far is it from carrying a supposition or an inference that it is not. We ought therefore to possess our souls of this apprehension (think men of this matter what they will) there is really a certain sort of life which doth distinguish a holy man from a mere man, as truly, as there is a natural life which doth distinguish a mere man from a carcass, from the deserted trunk and body of a man. And when we consider so, how can we forbear to lay our hands upon our hearts, and ask ourselves the question; "Do I live this life, yea, or no? Do I feel myself to live? Do I feel an inclination and bent of heart towards God: some principles of life, springing up from that divine root, which carries my soul towards that blessed object: that I am acted from God to God in my ordinary course?" We cannot have a greater question or of more concernment in all this world, to deal with our souls about, and therefore let it be seriously thought of.

SERMON X.*

WE are upon the first act of the Holy Spirit in reference to souls born of it, held forth to us in this scripture, namely, in the supposition, from whence we have observed—That the blessed Spirit of God doth by its own influence maintain the life, whereof it hath been the Author unto regenerate souls.

And here we propounded to speak, —of the life to be maintained, and—of the influence which maintains it. Of the former we have spoken already and are now to go on

2. To the latter. Concerning which we shall—shew what kind of influence it is; and—how it is ascertained unto regenerate souls. Or, give you some account of the nature and of the certainty of it.

(1) Of the former you may have some account by considering such properties of it as those that follow, namely,

[1.] It is a most free and arbitrary influence. It is a most gracious influence you know, in the very notion whereof the purest liberty is implied, wherein it has first to do with souls, as is subjoined to the Scripture before discoursed of in John 3 8. It is represented as "the wind that bloweth were it listeth." In operations of this kind the Spirit delights to discover and magnify a kind of sovereignty and royalty. It is a very awful word which hath reference, as we find, unto that consideration, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, in Phil-

* Preached February 26th. 1677. at Cordwainer's Hall.

2. 12. The consideration is immediately added, that "God worketh in us to will and to do of his own good pleasure." And I conceive there are two things hinted to us in that expression, namely, that whatsoever he doth of this kind, he doth with delight, taking a complacency in it, and enjoying, as it were, his own act; "he exercises loving-kindness in the earth," and in no kind or manner of operation so as in this, because herein he doth delight. And it also intimates, that what he doth herein, he doth upon no obligation; he doth at the rate of most absolute liberty, so as that he might do, or might not do. *Liberum est quod potuit non fuisse, that is free which might not have been.* "He works of good pleasure," having no other tie upon him than what he takes on and lays upon himself; and therefore "work out your salvation," saith the apostle, "with fear and trembling." He works now, you do not know whether he will by and by, if you neglect him now. Therefore is the blessed Spirit mentioned with that distinguishing title of the free Spirit, Uphold me with thy free Spirit, Psal. 51. 12. It is not only efficiently so, as the great Author of liberty unto those souls upon whom it works effectually, and with saving operations, as is the sense of what we find said in 2 Cor. 3. 17. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, liberty communicated by it unto those, who by the Spirit of the Lord, as it after follows, beholding as in a glass his glory, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory. Whilst it refines them, it enlarges them, defecates them, makes them capable of ascending, and renders them some way adequate to a large, universal, all comprehensive good; it is not, I say, only so a free Spirit, but it is in itself free, a Spirit that so works as was not to be expected, and that cannot be prescribed unto. Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or, being his counsellor, hath taught him? Isa. 40. 13.

[2.] It is a very various influence, in the degrees of its communication and operation. It may well be so, as being most free. It is not communicated alike unto all who have been born of this Spirit, nor to all those, nor to any of them, alike at all times. Some have more light and joy, more strength and vigour than others have; and the same persons have themselves their more lucid and turbid intervals, and in their time there is often a very quick succession of night and day; there is sorrow in the night, and a calm in the morning, and quick interchanges of such darkness and light, as in 30. Psalm. 5. Which variations do proceed partly, from sovereignty, as hath been said; but partly also from paternal justice. From sovereignty we may suppose, in great part, this Spirit comes and goes, even as it will, as to its more observable communications,

to discover its liberty: but oftentimes it varies the course of its dispensation, and the state of the soul with whom it hath to do, in a way of paternal justice. For as we know that there is such a thing as economical justice as well as political, among us, so there is a justice too which the holy God doth exercise in his own family, and among the children which have been begotten and born of him, as well as towards those who are under his government upon a more common account: and it is very meet and reasonable it should be so. It were a most incongruous thing, if he should be equally indulgent unto the careless and vain, and wanton, and extravagant, and the negligent of him and their own duty; as to the serious, and watchful, and diligent, and those who are most studious to please him, and most in love with his presence. He doth in his displeasure many times withdraw and hide himself, for the rebuke of negligences and undutiful deportments towards him; and he doth upon the account of the same justice shew, or manifest himself (as our Saviour's expression is in John 14. 21.) for the encouragement and reward of those that do more closely and faithfully adhere to him, and make it more their business and study to please and imitate him. The Spirit is often grieved, and in a degree quenched by the carelessness, and neglects and resistances even of its own offspring, or of those who have been born of it; and then the discipline of the family doth require that they should be put to rebuke; and so its influence comes to be an often varying thing.

[3.] Yet it is so far a continual influence as is necessary for the maintaining of the root of this life, that that may not totally wither; and therefore at the lowest ebb of those who are the offspring of this Spirit, there is still a sustaining influence upon them. As it was very low with the psalmist in the 73. psalm, when he was just ready to throw up all: Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, verse 13. He thought it was to no purpose to be any longer religious; he was become in the temper of his spirit so unlike a saint, that he judged himself, upon reflection, to be a great deal more like a beast. And yet he says in the 23rd. verse, that he had been ever with God, "Nevertheless I am continually with thee." Even all that while there was a presence of God continued, and he was even then held by his right hand. So are the souls of his held in life, which holdeth our soul in life, Psalm 66. 9. Though that might have another, yet it is probable enough to have a spiritual meaning, and there are passages in the context that may incline us to apprehend so.

[4.] It is a still, silent, a secret, and often an unobserved influence; such as by which no great noise is made, and many

times doth escape the notice of them who are the subjects of it. Their life is a secret kind of life, "hid with Christ in God," and by such a kind of influence it is maintained. God is near many times, when it is not known. He was in the very place (and we cannot think that Jacob meant it, by his essential presence, for that he very well knew, but by his gracious presence) and he says that he knew it not. As though he had said, "I little thought of God's being so nigh." Gen. 28. 16. And we may at least, allude to those words, in Hos. 11. 3. I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. He deals so with those who are born of him, as even to teach them to go, and they know not that it is he that carries them all along. The operation of the Spirit doth very much imitate that of nature, it is in a very still and silent way that the sap is drained in by the root, and ascends up the trunk of the tree, and diffuses itself to every branch, so that we may see that it lives, but we do not see how. The case is with souls that are brought to live in the Spirit, as with very infirm and languishing persons, who have been consumed, and even next to death in a putrid and corrupt air; being removed into such as is pure and wholesome they revive, but in a very insensible way: so is this life preserved by a vital, spiritual influence, which is as pure air to them, a gentle, indulgent, benign and cherishing air; they live by it, and never a whit the worse, because it is not so turbulent as to make a noise.

[5.] As still and silent as it is, it is yet a very powerful and efficacious influence. The case requires that it should be so; for it is a great thing to maintain such a life upon such terms. A thing that is so purely divine, if it were not maintained by a strong hand, it were hardly to be thought how it should subsist in such a region as this, so every way unsuitable to it; it is a life continually assaulted, often struck at; a life employed in continual conflicts and crowned with many a glorious victory, and that implies a mighty power to be employed to preserve life and maintain it. When I am weak, then am I strong. 2. Cor. 12. 10. Sure he must be weak in one respect, and strong in another: weak, he must mean spiritually too: weak, if you consider the principle in itself, absolutely; strong, if you consider it in reference to the continual aids and supplies that are given in. And it is plain that the exercises of this life require, that strength and might should be employed to maintain it through them. Very difficult and hard things they are, which those who live this life are exposed to the suffering of, and merely because they live this life, and hold it forth that they are, in this sense alive: as no body goes about to wound

a dead man, there is no need of that. Therefore is that rapturous prayer of the apostle in Col. 1. 11, 12. that they might be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks to the Father, who had made them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Made them meet, by making them sons, and to inherit as sons, or to receive the inheritance of the saints in light. They were born light, and of light, Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord, Ephes. 5. 8. Why, that being supposed, it required, as the apostle's prayer implies, an exertion of mighty, glorious power, to maintain this life unto that pitch and degree, that they might have a greater disposition to give thanks for what God had done upon them, to make them meet and capable subjects of such an inheritance, than to complain of a little suffering. "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power," with such a kind of might as bears the very impress and image upon it of God's own glorious power itself; a might that has a glory upon it, and accords to its original: as you may suppose the effect, in such causations as this, to be very like to the cause, and to the productive influence. The new creature, as soon as it is born, is born to conflict, toil and travel; born for fight, and born for victory. Such were the heroes, the sons of God. One so highly born, we must suppose born for great things; not only to enjoy, but to perform; and there must be a power proportionable hereunto to go with this heaven-born creature. I have written unto you, young men, says the apostle, because ye are strong, and have overcome the wicked one, 1 John 2. 14. Whilst they were yet but young, they had so great a conquest to glory in. "Ye have overcome the wicked one," *ye*, calling them by the name of little ones, a lower rank being designed by that expression: he yet tells them, that they had overcome, because greater was he that was in them, than he that was in the world, chap. 4. 4. And in chap. 5. 4. he says, that whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world. The predication is so universal, that we can conceive no state of a person born of God, be he never so newly born, but he is, even in that instant, made superior over this world, hath got the better of it, made his escape from the corruptions of it, which would hinder him through lust, and hath it in a degree under his feet: and therefore it must be a powerful influence, by which his life is maintained. Who are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation. 1 Pet. 1. 5.

[6.] It is a connatural influence, or suitable to the nature of man both as reasonable and renewed. As reasonable, it doth

it no violence, I drew them with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love. Hos. 11. 4. And it is accommodated unto all the principles of the new nature. It is an influence of faith to faith, of love to love, of meekness to meekness, and of humility to humility, as was intimated formerly.

[7.] It is a co-operative, or assisting influence. Such as doth engage us in the endeavour of preserving our own life, and then assists or co-operates with us therein. As the matter is in reference to the reflex acting of the soul, so it is, in proportion, in reference unto the direct. As when he would know what is wrought and done, or what impressions are made within, the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit, in that reflex way of operation. Rom. 8. 16. So it, proportionably, doth in the direct way of operation to, it works with our spirits, and makes use of their own agency, in order to the maintaining of their own life. And therefore as you have heard in that now-mentioned scripture, that we are kept by the mighty power of God through faith unto salvation, so we are told too in 1 John 5. 18. that he that is begotten of God, keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not; he keeps himself from those deadly, mortal touches which would endanger his precious life; that is, he is his own underkeeper. We are every one to be a brother's keeper, much more to ourselves; but still in a subordinate sense, subservient to, and dependent upon that supreme one. Indeed it were a kind of a monstrous thing in the creation, that there should be so noble a life planted there, but destitute of the self-preserving faculty or disposition; whereas every life, how mean soever, even that of a worm, a gnat or a fly, hath an aptitude in it, or a disposition accompanying it, to preserve itself.

[8.] It is a regular and an ordinate influence. I put these together, because they have an affinity, though they may import somewhat diverse notions. The Spirit works according to rule, or agreeably unto the word, in what it does for the maintaining of this life. My Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart, Isa. 59. 21. The word and the Spirit go together among all this race. The Spirit breathes in the word for the maintaining of this life. And so it is the influence of ordinate, not of absolute power, which works so as that there is no proportion between what it works, and what it works by; it works by apt and suitable means, and applies and directs our spirits unto such objects as are apt to be nutritive, or carry in them a suitable aliment for the maintenance of this life. Why, our natural life is maintained by a divine influence too; we could not otherwise draw breath, or subsist a moment. But how is it maintained?

Not by miracle. Not in such a way as doth supersede all useful means for that purpose: but it is maintained by God's preserving and directing the natural faculties that belong to us, unto such objects as are suitable for the maintaining of natural life, and may be aptly nutritive thereof. He doth not maintain this life of ours without eating, or drinking, or breathing; by an influence exclusive of all such means, nor without apt and suitable means too: for it is not maintained by feeding upon iron, or stones, or by drinking of poison, or by breathing in contagious airs, but by what is agreeable to itself, and apt to afford a suitable aliment to it. So it is in the spiritual life also; it is not maintained by an influence that doth exclude apt and proper means, but by this influence the mind and spirit is directed to intend and converse with such objects, out of which it can draw nourishment, and which are suitable unto this purpose. God doth not maintain this life in such a way, and upon such terms, as that, though men mind nothing in the world else, but what the men of this world do, they shall live well notwithstanding. It is not strange if they who feed upon husks, who converse with nothing but shadows, and pant only after the dust of the earth, are very languishing souls. Things altogether insipid, that have no sap, or juice or savour in them, formalities of religion, doubtful opinions, disputes about minute and inconsiderable things, airy notions that are apt to drop, or distil nothing upon the spirit of a man, are not the things that this life is likely to be maintained by.

And this influence is such as doth work by likely and apt means, as it enableth the soul to savour those things which are called the τα Πνευματος *the things of the spirit,* as you have it in Rom. 8. 5. They that are after the flesh, do mind (or savour) only the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit; and so they live by good, and suitable and savoury food, being made capable of savouring that food. As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby; αδολον γαλα, *that pure undeceitful milk,* as the word there imports. 1 Pet. 2. 2. The way therefore in which the Spirit doth maintain and improve this life, and afford vigour to it, is by leading the soul often into heaven, and making it to converse in the invisible regions; and to forget this world, and that it hath any relation to it, when it converses with God in spirit, and is made to look (for it draws down its nutriment even by the eye) by faith into the things that are unseen and hoped for; whereof that faith is the very substance and evidence too.

[9.] This influence is gradually perfective of the whole soul. Such as tends to improve it; such as by which it is still grow-

ing up to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus, Eph. 4. 13. We infer upon all that hath been said, that there is such a life as this. A very obvious inference, but it is very sad that it should be needful to make it. For alas! how hardly and slowly does it enter into the minds of most, that there is such a thing, notwithstanding all those many and great things which the word of God is full of concerning it! It is very strange that we should have such accounts in Scripture of the way of begetting it, of the nature and tendency of it, how it is maintained, what the operations of it are, what the enjoyments, what the pains which it doth at any time suffer, what its improvements, and what it shall end in at last, namely, eternal life; and that still it should be disbelieved by them, who will not profess to believe the Bible a legend, that there is such a life. They must too certainly disbelieve that there is any eternal life; for nothing can be plainer, than that the life, which shall never end, must sometime begin. But against so clear evidence there is nothing to be opposed, but ignorance and inexperience; "We know no such matter, and therefore we will not believe it, say about it what can be said." But what strange folly is this! What rashness! Such as any prudent man in another instance would censure and damn for the most vain, foolish and preposterous rashness. If any man shall say, that he will not believe that there is in another, such or such an excellency, superior to what is in himself, because he does not experience the same thing in himself, he would be thought fitter to be hooted at, than confuted. We do not reckon brutes capable judges of the perfections and improveableness of the nature of men; nor do we think one man a competent judge of what is in the spirit of another. What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in him? so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God, 1 Cor. 2. 11. Such as have been exercised about such matters can tell you much of the pleasure of philosophical knowledge; and divers can tell you of the strange things that are performable by mechanical, and chymical powers and operations. Who would not think that countryman very ridiculous, who because he knows nothing at all of these matters, will therefore deny that there are any men in the world, that are of more excellent skill and judgment than himself, about things of such a nature? He does not know what belongs to chymistry, and therefore he will not believe there is any chymist. He knows not what belongs to astronomy, and therefore he does not think there is any such skill as astronomical skill. This is a piece of folly which confutes itself, when men have no more to say, why they will not admit

that there is a divine life, a life come from heaven, than that they feel in their own spirits no workings of any such life. They may know indeed how the case is with themselves; that there is no such thing as life springing in them, that carries their hearts to God, and makes them still seek nearer and nearer union with him, thirst after his presence, and long to be near him; that carries them up often into heaven, and fills them with heavenly joy and solace in the foretaste of that blessed expected state; they may know, I say, that there is no such thing in their own hearts. But what! will you therefore judge there is no such thing in all the world? As if your knowledge were the measure of all reality, and there could be nothing within all the compass of being, but what must be within the compass of your understanding and experience. This is the greatest folly that can be thought of. We do not use so foolishly to conclude, when we hear of the pleasures and delicacies of such, and such a country spoken of, in which we have never been, that there is no such thing, because we have not seen it with our own eyes; or, there are no such fruits, because we have not relished them with our taste. It will be therefore of very great importance to us to fix the belief of this in our own souls, that there is such a life; when the Spirit of the living God hath so much to do about it, and is continually attending it as his charge. Doth it employ itself about nothing? But the time doth not allow to proceed.

SERMON XI.*

WE are speaking of the influence by which the divine life is maintained; and have already shewn what kind of influence it is. We are now,

(2.) To shew how it is ascertained unto regenerate souls, or, give you some account of the certainty of it.

[1.] It is ascertained by the relation they hereupon come to stand in to God. They are his children, his begotten ones. You know it is naturally every one's care to provide for those who have been born of them, unto whom they have been (though but the secondary) authors of life and being. And the apostle argues even in this very case from this reason, Rom. 8. 13, 14. If ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God: as though he had said, "Do you think that he will not care that his own sons shall live?" And the argument is yet more strong and enforcing, if you consider how this relation terminates, namely, more peculiarly and remarkably upon our very spirits; for so you find he is called the Father of spirits in contradistinction unto the fathers of our flesh, Heb. 12. 9. Therefore the relation leads to a more special care and concern about the life of our spirits, and most especially about that life of them, which is most imme-

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diately from him, and most resembles his own: not that natural life, which we have in common with the rest of men, but that life which is the more peculiar product of his own blessed Spirit, even as it is the Spirit of grace and of holiness. It is in that sense (as we have formerly shewn you at large) that we are said to be born spirit of spirit. It is only a production, or generation *secundum quid*, and in this peculiar respect, the thing produced being his own holy, living image, or a nature superadded to the human nature conforming unto his own in moral respects, and having been, in this so peculiar a kind, a Parent and an Author of life, it is not at all to be doubted, but the relation will draw with it the greatest care about that life which he hath given.

[2.] Add hereunto the paternal love which accompanies the relation. There is many times the relation of a father unaccompanied with the love of a father (though it is very unnatural where it is so) but here it is not so to be understood. It were horrid and blasphemous to think such a thought. Do we suppose him, who is the very Fountain of that natural affection which still descends and flows down, through all the successive generations of the world, in an ordinary stated course, from father to son, to be destitute of it himself; that there is a penury and want, or a failure in the very Fountain? Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him, Psalm 103. 13. He is the very Fountain and Spring of all that kindness, and pity, and compassion and love, that did ever reside in the hearts of any parents towards their own children, he put and placed it there; therefore we are to conceive it in him, as in its highest original, and its proper and native seat, and therefore fully and most invariably there. And our Saviour's argumentation to this very purpose, how much doth it carry of convictive evidence with it? If ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give his Spirit unto them that ask him? Luke 11. 13. And it is an instinct put into all that are of this divine progeny to be still looking up with craving eyes for this Spirit. It is the very sum of the desire of the new creature, it doth, as it were comprehensively enwrap all its desires; it is its very natural sense, "Lord, thy Spirit!" Though it is many times a silent and inexplicit prayer, yet it is as it were, the voice of that new nature, "more of thy Spirit." The exigency of the case speaks, the very langours and faintings of holy souls carry craving in them, though they have not so formed desires, that they can reflect upon them and take notice of them: even as the parched ground doth secretly supplicate to the heavens for

relief and supplies. Such we know the Psalmist's metaphor is once and again. And do we think that the Father of mercies (as he is called, as well as the Father of our spirits) will not hear the cries, and regard the necessities, even the crying necessities of his own (otherwise languishing and dying) offspring? He that feeds the ravens, will he starve souls? The very sea monsters draw forth their breasts, and do we think that there is less pity and compassion with God? The instinct is natural even in inferior nature, and stronger according as the order of being is more noble in which it is to be found. It is true, there may be among human creatures, some more than monsters, so prodigiously unnatural as not to regard the fruit of their own bodies. Lam. 4. 3. But suppose such a case; if a woman can forget her sucking child, and not have compassion on the fruit of her womb,—yet will not I forget; saith the Lord Isa. xlix. 15. I can never forget you: I have graven you upon the palms of my hands, as there it is explained. As if the design were to let us know, that he did make it a concern to himself never to forget, that he would always have a remembrancing token before his eyes, to make supply to the necessity of souls, as their case should require.

[3.] Some thought may possibly occur with some; that though it be true that a fatherly love doth commonly follow the relation, yet, where it hath been in much strength and vigour, possibly something or other may avert it, something may be done by a child to alienate the father's love; we have therefore a yet farther assurance from the divine wisdom and all-comprehending knowledge. From which it must be understood, that when he formed the design of raising up to himself, such a seed from among the lapsed children of men, he had the compass of it lying in view, and all things were present to his eye that should any way come to influence this design, or have any aspect upon it one way or another, whether to hinder or promote it: and yet it is manifest that he had such a design, and hath laid and fixed it, having all things in his view, even whatsoever might make most against it. Commonly if the minds and inclinations of persons do alter so, as that they come to disaffect, where heretofore they have borne a very peculiar love and kindness, it is upon some surprize that the alienation begins, something falling out unto them which was altogether unexpected: they did not think that such a one would have served them so and so, or have dealt so with them. But unto all-comprehending knowledge nothing is new. The blessed God had the entire prospect of his whole design, nor can we therefore suppose any thing that should alienate his paternal love, after he hath begun to exercise and express it, which he

had not obvious unto his notice before. He loves with an everlasting love, from everlasting, to everlasting: Having loved he loves to the end. John 13. 1. And whereas it may be also said, that though we should suppose a continuing love with a father towards his own children, yet he may be reduced to those straits that he cannot do for them as he would; the matter therefore is farther ascertained,

[4.] From his all-sufficient fulness. There is still the same undecaying plenitude of Spirit with him, that can never abate or grow less. It is a spring or fountain unexhausted and inexhaustible, that can never be drained or drawn dry. And therefore do we think, that those who have received this life from him shall not continue to live, when there is such love, and kindness, and compassion in conjunction with so rich and undecaying fulness? Methinks to any reasonable understanding this should make the matter very sure. Again,

[5.] We are farther ascertained by his express promise. And it is very considerable unto this purpose, how noted and eminent in the Scripture, especially in the New Testament (though we have divers instances too in the Old) the promise is of the Spirit. Indeed the matter is so represented to us, that we have reason to account, that as before Christ's coming, the coming of Christ was the great promise, and the hope of Israel; so after the coming of Christ in the flesh, the gift of the Spirit was the great promise, the promise of the gospel, Christ being (as then he was) actually come. It is therefore to be observed in Acts 2. 38, 39. that the apostle in that sermon calling upon his hearers (who were principally Jews, at least by religion) to repent, he tells them for their encouragement that they should "receive the gift of the Holy Ghost: For the promise is unto you and to your children." Observe the connexion; the giving of the Holy Ghost is spoken of by him as the promise, which did virtually comprehend in it the sum of the gospel: and virtually it did so, for if that were once made good, all would be sure to be made good. And our Saviour speaks of this as what would be a greater good, a good that would more than compensate his own longer abode and presence in the flesh among his disciples: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I depart, I will send him unto you, John 16. 7. Certainly it could not be expedient to part with a greater good for a less; no, nor could it be said to be an expediency to part with an equal good for an equal: if then it were expedient that He should go, that the Spirit might come, that must be reckoned a good superior to his mere bodily presence and abode. And so the apostle plainly intimates in 2.

Cor. 5 17. compared with what goes immediately before, Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. He speaks of the matter with complacency, and with a kind of jubilation; as though he had said, I do not desire to know him after the flesh any more, that is, in comparison of what he after speaks of, namely, that inward, vital, spiritual union with him, by which the whole frame of the new creation comes to spring up in the soul. "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new." And it is promised in John 14. 16. that this Spirit shall be given to abide with them for ever, in most exact correspondence unto the end and purpose for which he was to be given, (ver. 19.) to be the continual maintainer of their life. That must be a very constant thing to us which we are continually to live by, for if there were an intercision of life for a moment it would not be recovered. From the privation of a habit there were no return. He says therefore, "he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;" so fully to answer the exigence of the case, that you shall be no moment destitute of his vital influence.

[6.] We are farther assured from the consideration of the divine faithfulness, without the consideration whereof the promise would signify little. For there are many promises made, and not kept; but "he is faithful that hath promised." The promise of an unfaithful person gives very little assurance; but we are to add to the consideration of the express promise of God, that it is most simply repugnant to the perfection of his nature to be capable of deceiving us. In hope of eternal life which God that cannot lie hath promised, Tit. 1. 2. And that eternal life is nothing else but this life, whereof the Spirit hath been the Author, continued and improved unto that blessed, eternal state, till it reach to that plenitude and fullness of life at length. A well of water springing up into everlasting life, John 4. 14. And God, that we might be assured that he will keep his word, hath added hereunto the ratification of his own solemn oath, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, there might be strong consolation to the heirs of promise, Heb. 6. 17, 18. And as I have said, this is the great promise, which is the very sum of the rest.

[7.] This continual vital influence is ascertained unto the regenerate by their union with Christ, considered in conjunction with—his being constituted and appointed a Mediator between God and them.—As he is Mediator, he comes to have all that should serve the necessities of their souls lodged in his

hand, and particularly to be the great treasury of spirit and life to them, and for them. All fulness, even by the Father's pleasure, dwells in him. But it may be said what is it to them, that Christ is full, that he is rich, that he lives, and that there is a fountain and treasury of life, and spirit in him? What! is it nothing to them? Why, consider that they are united to him, one with him. He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit, 1 Cor. 6. 17. And that the inwardness of this union might be with more life represented to us, it is said in Ephes. 5. 30. We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. And do we think, that when such rich plenitude of spirit and influence is in that head, he will not diffuse it, and make it flow to those who are his members? that he will have any members to be cut off from him as totally dead?

[8.] This matter is ascertained from the consideration of the work inchoate or already begun. A great argument this, that the issue and good event of such a thing will certainly be brought to pass, even with wise, and prudent, and considering men. For there is no such man that doth begin a business which he will not carry through, if he be able. And therefore with the blessed God the argument is most strong. He hath been the Author of this life, by his Spirit, unto the souls that he hath renewed; and therefore surely he will continue, and carry it on, and bring it to the mature and perfect state at last unto which he hath designed it. See how the apostle argues in Phil. 1. 6. Being confident, (says he,) of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work will perform (or finish) it until the day of Jesus Christ. He is not of that light and uncertain temper, as, having begun such an undertaking as this, about which he hath expressed so much concern, and wherein it did appear his heart was so much engaged, to throw it off. Indeed the lubricity of a man's spirit makes him very susceptible of such a thing as this, to begin a design, and then be sick of it, grow weary, neglect it, and throw away all thoughts and concern about it, and divert to somewhat else; but it is most repugnant to the natural, essential perfection of the blessed God to be capable of such a change. He will not forsake his people (as Samuel speaks to the mourning Israelites in 1 Sam. 12. 22.) because it hath pleased him to make them his people. Though he sometimes seems, for the awakening of us out of our security, and the engaging of us unto that care and diligence, which the case requires, to represent himself, as if he were contesting with himself about this matter, whether he should continue the relation, and the care that belongs to it, yea, or no; yet we see how he answers himself in Jer. 3. 19. How shall I put thee among the child-

ren, &c ? I said "Thou shalt (yet) call me, My Father; and shalt not turn away from me." He resolves that he would with the relation, continue in them an instinct always to look towards him as their Father. "Thou shalt look to me as thy Father, and shalt not turn away from me, and so will I preserve all things entire between thee and me."

These considerations taken together are sufficient to ascertain to a regenerate soul that may be solicitous about the state of its own case, that the influence shall be continued, which is necessary for the continued maintenance of that life whereof the Spirit of God hath been the Author.

The *use* that we shall make of this at present shall only be in some few practical inferences, reserving the farther use till after we have considered and opened the other doctrine from the latter part of the verse.

We have already (so far preventing ourselves) inferred,

1. That there is such a life as that which we are wont to call the life spiritual, distinct from, and to be superadded to the natural life of men. I insisted upon this before, and therefore do but mention it now.

2. We may farther infer, that this life is of a most excellent and noble kind. Of this we are taught to make a judgment by the way of its being maintained. What is it maintained upon? They that live this life, live in the Spirit: certainly this is a very high way of living, and speaks the life that is to be maintained so, and only maintainable so, to be a life of a most excellent and noble kind. The excellency of any life is to be measured and judged by the objects which are suitable to it, and nutritive of it, or, out of which it has its sustenance and support. They that do live this life, as they do so, can breathe no other but this pure and sacred breath. They "live in the Spirit." They live no where but in a region of vitality, filled with vital influence even by the eternal Spirit: this is to live at a very high rate. Think therefore how excellent a life that is which the blessed God doth distinguish his own children by, from other men.

3. Since this life is here spoken of as in this way to be continued—we learn, that it must certainly at some time or other begin. And therefore methinks this should be a rousing and awakening thought unto those who, when they hear of the ways and methods of maintaining and improving the spiritual life, have yet cause to suspect or doubt, whether as yet they have the very beginnings of it. Methinks it should be a chilling thought unto such a heart, "How much do I hear (may such a one say) of mighty things, things of very great and vast importance, which are all impertinencies to me, they signify

nothing, nor have any suitableness in them to my case! How great things do fall beside me!" So it must be with every one that hath not yet begun to live this life. What! not yet begun? Do we find so many things so industriously inserted into the Scripture, to instruct and direct us concerning the ways of exercising, maintaining and improving this life, and I not yet feel the very beginnings of it! O how much behind are men unto the whole order of christians, of those that are so indeed and in truth, and may deservedly admit the name! "Some are gone so far, and I am yet to begin my course!"

4. We hence see how great a perfection is lacking unto unrenewed souls. How great a perfection properly appertaining unto the spirit and nature of a man, and which ought to be found in it and with it. Why, there is a whole state of life yet lacking to them. A dismal thing to think of! It might fill a man with astonishment to think that he should be so far short of what a man ought to be, because he is not yet so much as alive towards God. You have at large heard what that life is by which we are said to live spiritually, and that it is not to be understood in a natural but in a moral sense. For admit that the spirit of a man is of itself naturally and essentially a self acting thing, yet it were not to be imagined that God would make such a creature, and turn it loose into this world to act at random: life therefore in this moral sense is a principle of acting regularly and duly towards God. And though there be the natural powers and faculties that belong unto the soul of a man, as it is such a creature in such a place and order of the creation, yet while they are destitute of that rectitude by which they are inclined to God, or apt to act and move towards him by rule and according to prescription, such a soul may as truly and fitly be said to be dead, or those powers and faculties of it to have a death in them, as the hand of a man's body, supposing it to retain its natural shape and figure, but to be altogether useless unto the ends and purposes for which such an organ was made: if it be raised up, it falls down a dead weight; he cannot move it this way, or that: you will say, this is a dead thing; yet it hath its shape still.

It is strange to see how far some have gone in the apprehensions of this matter by merely natural light. You know we spake of this life comprehending, with the principles of grace, the consolations, and pleasures, and joys which are apt to result and spring from thence. Alone to have such a life, is not enough to denominate a person to be a living person, but to be well; to be healthful and vigorous and strong. I remember Socrates I find to speak thus (as Zenophon reports of him) among his dying discourses concerning life in this moral sense,

"Do you ask (says he) what it is to live? I will tell you what it is. To live truly is to endeavour to excel in goodness; and to live comfortably, or joyfully is to feel one's self to do so, or to feel one's self growing better and better." He calls those, persons that lived pleasantly, who felt themselves improving in respect of the good temper of their spirits. And I remember Philo-Judæus (though he had opportunity for much more light than the other) giving the notion of a man, as that which he would have commonly to obtain, says, that "no one ought to be reckoned a partaker of the rational nature, that has not in him hope towards God." So he speaks of religion; and says plainly, that "he who hath this hope in him, he only is to be called a man, and that the other is to be looked upon as no man." That was his notion. We may so far comport with it as to say, that there is certainly a great perfection, belonging to the nature of man, wanting to them that are yet not come to live this life. And it is amazing to think that such a perfection is wanting by privation, in the proper sense, and not by negation only. As how dismal a thing were it, should we suppose all the rational powers and faculties to be on a sudden cut off from the nature of a man, so that he is become a mere brute, he cannot think a thought, every thing of reason and discourse is become alien to him! And if we should suppose next the faculties of the sensitive nature to be cut off, and he, who was before a rational man, had the power of reason and speech, and could move to and fro and converse as a man, turned into a tree; life he has, but no better life than that: and if you would suppose that life gone too, and he at last turned into a stone; these were most dismal degenerations. It is no disparagement at all to what was originally a brute, to be a brute, or to a tree, to be a tree, or to a stone, to be a stone; for it has all the perfection that belongeth to such a creature, or to the order whereof it is in the creation of God. But when this life is lacking to the soul of man, there is a perfection lacking which did originally belong unto this order of creatures. For what! Do you think that ever God made man to disaffect himself? that he ever made a reasonable creature that should not be capable of loving its own original, and the supreme good? And whereas we find now that men do universally make themselves the centre of their own loves, do we think that ever God made man to do so? Why, it is a dreadful transformation then, that is come upon the nature of man, and a most amazing degeneracy. It would startle us, if we would but admit serious thoughts of it, that there should be an entire state of life so generally lacking among men. And especially, if any of us upon reflection, laying our hands upon

our hearts, do feel no movings of such a life, no beatings of a pulse God-ward and heaven-ward that may bespeak and be an indication of it. To think that I have such a thing lacking in me, that doth belong originally unto the nature of man; not so light and trivial a thing that, if I had it, it would add some kind of perfection to me which might conveniently enough be spared; but a whole orb and order is lacking to me which belong to such a creature as I. Certainly it should put such a person mightily out of conceit with himself, and make him think, "What a monster am I in the creation of God! I am no way suited to the order of creatures in which my Creator hath set me; for that was an order of intelligent creatures all formed to the loving, adoring, and praising, and serving the great Author of their beings, with open eyes beholding and adoring his excellencies and glory; and I have no disposition thereto."

5. We may farther infer how great a misery is consequent, where persons have not begun to live this life; there is a great perfection lacking in this life itself, but it infers a farther consequent misery, that is, a being cut off from all conversing with God, a kind of exile out of that region, which is within the management of the Spirit, the region in which it rules, and which it replenishes with life, and with vital influence: for being dead towards God they can have no converse with him. If a person be dead, you know what is usual, "Bury my dead out of my sight." They are not fit to come into God's sight or to have to do with him. Would we like it well to converse among the dead; or endure to have carcasses lying with us in our houses, and in our beds, and to be found at our tables? Why, the case speaks itself; they who are destitute of this life, are quite cut off from God, and from all his converse; they are as it were exiles from the world and region of spirit and spirituality. O the strength and vigour, the joys and pleasures, the purity and peace of that blessed region! But these are excluded by their want of this life. The Spirit can only statedly converse with those that are alive. It steps out of its region (the case were otherwise sad with us) to make men alive, and to draw them within the circle, as it were, that they may be within the reach of its continual ordinary converse. But they are in no way of converse with the Spirit, as yet, that have not the principles of this life as yet planted in them. So that they are to look upon themselves as cut off from God, and as those with whom his Spirit hath no converse in a stated way. What it may do, what it will do in a way of sovereign grace is more than they know; but it is their great concern to implore it, that it would come and move upon them,

and attemper them to the region of life. They are otherwise cut off as from the land of the living, and have no place nor fellowship there.

6. Let us see the wonderful grace of this blessed Spirit. Well may it be called the Spirit of grace, Who hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace, Heb. 10. 29. We should frame our apprehensions accordingly of this blessed Spirit, as the light of such a scripture would dictate, and account it the Spirit of all love, and goodness, and benignity, and sweetness that admits such souls to have a livelihood in it. "If ye live in the Spirit;" O strange goodness this! Such impure creatures so lost in darkness and death, now brought within those blessed confines! That the Spirit of the living God should have taken them into such association with itself! As though he had said, "Come, you shall live with me: here is safe living, comfortable living." The communion which God holds with such souls is called the communion of the Holy Ghost in 2 Cor. 13. 14. That it should come and lead souls out of death and darkness into the divine presence, and say to them, "Dwell here, in the secret of the Almighty, and under the shadow of his wing. His feathers shall cover you, and his continual influence cherish you and maintain your life: here you shall spend your days!" This is a wonderful vouchsafement. How should we magnify to ourselves the grace of the Spirit upon this account! And yet farther,

7. We see the great hazard of withdrawing ourselves from under the tutelage and influence of this Spirit. It is done by neglect, done by self-confidence, done by remitting our dependance, done by resistance, by our disobedience, our little obsequiousness to the Spirit: and you see the hazard of it. Step out of this region of life, and there is nothing but impure and desolate darkness. We languish and die, if we retire, or recede and step without these sacred boundaries. To be confined and kept within them how great a vouchsafement is it! And, that it is undertaken that it shall be so! But though it shall be so, we are not to expect that this should be done without our care. We shewed you, in speaking of that influence, that it is an assisting and co-operative influence, among many other particulars.

Lastly, We may infer, that is a most weighty and important charge that lies upon every renewed soul. For think, how precious and excellent a life is to be maintained in them; that spiritual, divine life, a thing which both requires and justifies their utmost care: requires it; for what would a person think of it, if he should be intrusted with the care of the life of a prince, the child of a great monarch? If any of us had

such a charge committed to us, "I charge you with the life of this child, and to use your best care and endeavour for the nourishing of its life, and for the cultivating of it, and fitting it to the best purposes whereof it may be capable." How would this engage one's utmost diligence, that it is a very important life that is committed to my care. We have every one of us the care incumbent upon us of the life of a divine thing produced and brought forth in us, and which we are to apply the name first to, when we call ourselves the sons or children of God. There the name falls first; it is that divine thing that is his son, and we are only his sons or children upon the account of that. To have a divine life to maintain and cherish in my soul, as I may have a subordinate agency, under the Spirit in order thereto, how should it engage my utmost solicitude and care, that nothing be done offensive to this life, that every thing be done that may tend to preserve and improve it!

And as it requires our care, so it finally justifies it. A great many are apt to think, yea, and do often speak, reproachfully concerning those who do any thing to discover and hold forth the power and efficacy of such an inbeing life in them. To what purpose do these persons take so much more care than other men about their souls, and about their spiritual state as they are wont to call it? Why, they have a life more than you to be solicitous about; a life that you know nothing of; a noble, a divine life which it is incumbent upon them to care for. They wonder that this race of men do not run with them into the same excess of riot, when they never consider, these are things that would be noxious to my life. It may be you find nothing in you, unto which such things would be an offence: they would hurt my very life. This hath the holy soul to say to justify all that care and concern which he hath about the maintaining and preserving his spiritual life. And would not he be thought to talk every unreasonably that should say; why should such, and such men, who are observed to be much addicted to study, and retirement, and contemplation, why should they inure themselves to more thoughts than the beasts do? They, who apply themselves to a course of praying, meditation, &c. why should they do so more than the beasts, who, say they, do but eat and drink, and what is given them that they gather, and no more ado? The answer would be obvious from such persons: "I have a thing called reason in me, which I am to cultivate, and improve, and make my best of, which beasts have not." And is not that a sufficient answer; "I have a life more in me, than other men have, which I am to tend, and take all possible care of; a life capable of great

improvements, a life of great hopes, a life put into me upon high accounts, and for the greatest and most noble designs." And therefore if any of us be tempted by the licentious persons of the age to run their course, and do as they do, pray let us learn to distinguish our cases. The matter is not with us as it is with them. We have somewhat else in us; a divine thing, which hath a sacred life belonging to it, implanted in our natures; which hath given us hope, and which is in us the earnest and pledge of a blessed eternity; an immortal state of life: And what! Shall we be prodigal of this? Is this a thing to be exposed, and ventured, and thrown away, merely to comply with the humour of a sensual wretch, who knows nothing of the matter, and is a stranger to all such affairs?

SERMON XII.*

YOU have heard of a twofold work of the Holy Spirit upon such souls as it hath regenerated, or put a principle of spiritual life into, namely,—the maintaining of that life, which is mentioned in the former part of this verse, "If we live in the Spirit;" and—the causing, and conducting, and governing the motions which are agreeable to that life, in the latter part, "let us also walk in the Spirit."—We have spoken of the former of these, and are now to proceed unto the latter, that is, to treat of that part or hand which the Holy Spirit hath, about the motions and actions of renewed souls; and these must be considered in a reference unto that life unto which they are connatural, as you see they are mentioned in that reference in the text, "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Therefore the latter truth which we have to note to you from this Scripture you may take thus;—That it belongs to their state, who live in the Spirit, to walk also in the Spirit.—In speaking to which we shall,

I. Shew, what it is to walk in the Spirit.

II. How it belongs unto the state of such persons so to walk.

I. What walking in the Spirit imports. This we may understand by inquiring severally into, and then joining together

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these two notions; that is,—what walking doth import; and then,—what it imports to do any thing in the Spirit.—These being explained and put together will give us the full and true import of walking in the Spirit.

1. Walking in the general, you know, is an expression that signifies action or motion; and sometimes it is taken in a natural sense, and then you know what it signifies: sometimes it is taken in a moral sense, a sense borrowed from the natural, because of some analogy and agreement between the one and the other; and then it plainly signifies the course of a man's conversation. So it must necessarily be understood to signify here, according to the transumed or borrowed sense. And nothing is more ordinary in Scripture than to express the course of a man's conversation, whether it be good, or whether it be bad, by the phrase of walking; as you cannot but have taken notice, such of you as have been conversant with the Scriptures, how often it is said concerning the kings of Israel and Judah, that they walked so and so; such, and such a one in the way of his fathers, and the like: where the series of his actions, morally considered, is most expressly intended to be signified.

But that we may speak more distinctly unto the notion of walking, because it will give much light unto the matter which we have before us; as, in general, walking doth signify action or motion, so it also carries with it some specification of that action or motion, and so doth import action or motion of some special kind. For, though all walking is motion, yet all motion is not walking: and therefore it is an expression that serves to be some way restrictive of the general notion of action or motion. And that we may speak more clearly hereunto, we must take notice of something that walking doth *expressly denote*, or that is more formally included in the notion of it; and somewhat that it doth *connote* or import by a kind of *collateral* signification thereof.

(1.) There are some things which walking doth more directly and formally denote. As

[1.] It denotes a self-motion. A motion which proceeds from an internal principle in the thing that moves: though not originally; for that cannot be supposed concerning it in a creature, but subordinately only. If one rolls a stone to and fro upon the ground, it would be very improper to say, that stone walks. It signifies motion from an internal principle a kind of self-motion.

[2.] It doth most properly signify a voluntary motion. There may be motion from an internal principle which is not voluntary, as there are many things that have a principle of

motion in themselves, which have not the power of will; which belongs only unto intellectual agents; unto free creatures. Now if a man be dragged this way or that, he is not said to walk, though he make use of his own motive power too.

[3.] It imports an orderly motion. For he is not said to walk who only wildly skips and fetches freaks this way and that. And that signification is especially carried that is used for walking here, στοιχεω; a word from whence that word στιξ, comes, which signifies military order, the orderly motion of any army in rank and file: so the word is noted to signify. Yea, and from the same word comes a word that signifies the order which is observed in verse, when the composition is most exact and accurate, of so many feet, or making up such or such a form of metre; διστιχον. A metrical kind of order is signified by this word; so as that one's motions are measured by a strict kind of rule all along.

[4.] It imports a pleasurable motion. For you know we are wont to walk for our recreation. If persons go a journey, or the like, that is toilsome, we express that more usually by another word, travelling: but if a person be gone forth to exercise himself in order to his recreation and health, then we usually say, he is gone a walking.

[5.] It is a continued motion. For he that fetches a skip and jump now and then, this way and that, is not said to walk; but walking is a course of motion continued for such a time.

[6.] It is a progressive motion. There may be continued motion which is not progressive. One may continue moving to and fro, in the same place, for a long time together: but walking is a going forward. These things (as is obvious unto a common understanding) are carried in the notion of walking most expressly, and so it may be said to denote these things more formally. But

(2.) There are also some things which it doth connote. And they are especially these two, namely:—an *end*, and—a *way*.

[1.] It connotes an end; for walking is a tendency some whither, or unto some term. And

[2.] It connotes a way; for a man cannot walk, but it must be in some way or other, whether it be better, or worse.

These things are considerable concerning the notion of walking. And as walking doth import a specification of motion, or, is a more special kind of motion; so the addition of "in the Spirit" plainly imports a specification of walking, so as to denote a more special sort and kind of walking.

2. We shall consider, more at large, what it is to do anything

in the Spirit, before we come to sum up all in joining these notions together. To do any thing in the Spirit, is to do it in the light, and in the power of the Spirit.

(1.) In the light of the Spirit. For whenever it comes to deal with the spirits of men, it is in that way, by creating a light to them, which is directive of their motions. Let us walk in the light of the Lord, Isai. 2. 5. that is walking in the Spirit. To do any thing in the Spirit, is to do it in the light, not blindly and darkly as those that know not what they do.

(2.) In the power of the Spirit. I will go in the strength of the Lord God, I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only, Psalm 71. 16.

These things thus laid before you will make it plain to us what is carried "in walking in the Spirit."

3. We are to put together the notions of walking, and doing any thing in the Spirit. And an account of the result and sum of what has been said may be given you in these several particulars.

(1.) To walk in the Spirit is to intend and tend towards an end which is suitable to the Spirit. It is most proper to begin there; and that is, in short, walking in the Spirit imports a continual tendency towards God, as the great end and mark at which one aims. And this is an end agreeable to the Spirit; and this, and no other, as the last and ultimate end. The soul that is acted by the Spirit of God is acted towards God. Do but observe how these things are connected in that passage Psalm 63. 8. My soul followeth hard after thee. How comes it to do so? Thy right hand holds me up. And what is that right hand? Why, it can signify nothing else but the power of God, that is his Spirit, which we are taught to look upon as the great active principle of all the motions and operations of the creatures, whereof it can be said to be directly determinative. Then we may conclude that a person is acted by the Spirit, or walks in the Spirit, when he aims at God through his whole course. While men are under the power and rule of another, that is, a fleshly and corrupt principle, it is all for self that their designs lie, and the course of their actions run; they are confined wholly (as hath been said upon an occasion) within a circle of acting from self to self: but when once the Spirit of God comes to have the government and the motions of the soul, as all those motions do immediately spring from God, so they tend to him, and centre in him. The soul designs him, and none but him in its whole course. And therefore, it being the great work of the Redeemer to reduce and bring back souls to God, what part or

hand the Spirit of God hath in this matter, is in pursuance of the Redeemer's design. Therefore we are said to "have access, or come to God through him by the Spirit," this is the common course stated for all men; for Jew and Gentile both, for with such reference it is said, Through him we both have an access by one Spirit unto the Father, (Ephes. 2. 18.) implying that none would ever come at God, aim at God, or tend towards him, but as, by the motive power, and in the directive light of the blessed Spirit, they are acted and carried towards him through Christ.

(2.) Walking in the Spirit implies a constant adherence unto Christ by dependance and subjection. Which it must needs do upon the account that all walking, as I have said, connotes a way, and Christ is expressly represented to us as the way leading unto God. I am the way, no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. John 14. 6. And hence, as we have this phrase of "walking in the Spirit," so we have that too of walking in Christ, Col. 2. 6. And the apostle Peter directs such a course of walking as might put them to shame who should falsely accuse their good conversation in Christ. 1. Pet. 3. 16. And certainly it is one great part of the work of the Holy Ghost upon the spirits of men so to attemper and frame them unto the way of access to God, or the way wherein God can be come at, that it may become even spiritually natural unto the soul to walk in that way. While they walk in Christ, they walk in the Spirit. It is the business of the Spirit to engage the soul in this way of tending and moving towards God, and to keep it on therein.

(3.) It imports walking in the divine light, whereof the Spirit is the continual Author unto renewed souls, And I do not now mean only that external light which it affords by the Scripture revelation, but an inward vital light which it sets up and continues in the soul itself, having caused "a day-spring, a day-star to arise there, and made a day within." The Spirit creates unto the soul a region of light, wherein it converses, while, it is said to converse in the Spirit. They unto whom it hath not created such a light, are said "to walk in darkness;" and whatsoever there is of external light shining round about them, their darkness comprehends it not, as in John 1. 5. But where this blessed Spirit is it makes those that were darkness to be light in the Lord. "Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord;" well, and what then; Walk as children of the light, Ephes. 5. 8. It is true, that light doth here, as well as elsewhere, signify holiness, but not without reference unto intellectual light; only it imports that intellectual light to be a practical, refining, trans-

forming, vital light, so as that the same thing is capable of a twofold denomination, of light and of life too; as St. John speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, speaks of him as under the notion of life, and saith, that life was the light of men, John, 1. 4. It is therefore a region of living light which the Spirit doth create unto souls, in which they converse and walk: then are they said to walk in the Spirit, by that work and office of the Holy Ghost, which our Saviour calls "its leading persons into all truth." He promises in those consolatory, valedictory discourses of his to his disciples, (in 14. 15. and 16. chapters of John's gospel) again and again the Spirit, and for this purpose, "to lead them into truth;" that, you know, is the part of directive light. But then it is one thing to direct only by telling, so and so you must do; and another thing by way of instinct, or by an inward prompting; by which too a person does not go in that case blindfold, but with an inclination, with spontaneity, and seeing his way all the way he goes. He walks in the light; and such a light as is directive and active to him at once.

(4.) It imports acting by a divine power all along through our whole course. The Spirit, where it is, is the Spirit of power, of love, and of a sound mind, 2 Tim. 1. 7. They are said to be in the Spirit, who are under the power and dominion of it, as John says of himself, that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, in Rev. 1. 10. Under the influence of its almighty power, its captivating dominion. According as when persons are said to be in the flesh (an expression frequently used in Scripture) it notes their being under the power and dominion of a fleshly principle. So to walk in the Spirit, is to act on all along under the power and governing influence of the Spirit. I will strengthen them in the Lord, and they shall walk up and down in his name, Zech. 10. 12. That one attribute, belonging to the divine nature, namely, the power of God, is more especially pointed at there.

There is a strict connexion between this and the last mentioned thing, that light and this power; that light being a vital, a living light. Though we may have distinct notions of them, yet they are in themselves connected and most inseparable. Come ye, let us walk in the light of the Lord, Isa, 2. 5. Even in the form of expression, though light is the thing which is directly spoken of, there is implied and involved therewith a certain active power, the being moved to go, and walk in that light, which, as such, was to guide them in their way. See what is referred to in ver. 3. He will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths. This signifies that their spirits were acted by a certain power which did incline

them unto this thing; and not that they were merely enlightened. And whereas in this very chapter, the expression, "led by the Spirit," is made use of in ver. 18. "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law;" as also in Rom. 8. 14. As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God; the word which is rendered *led* is ἀγονται, and signifies acted or moved by a certain power. As many as are acted by the Spirit of God; and they that are acted by the Spirit of God are not under the law, they are not cursed and condemned by it.

(5.) It imports acting from spiritual habitual principles that are fixed and settled in the soul; and therefore includes in it the exercise of all the several graces of the Spirit. For you must know that when we say, walking in the Spirit implies walking in the divine light, and by the divine power; it is not to be understood as if there were nothing else but a temporary, present ray of light, and efforts of power from the Spirit; and so that there comes to be any thing habitually fixed in the soul itself. But though it is very true indeed that habitual light &c. in the soul from the Spirit must be maintained and continued by the Spirit, it is nevertheless to be looked upon as an habitual principle which is in the soul itself. And the case is here but as it is in nature; for there can be no sort of life in all the creation, whereof God is not the Author; nor any action done, but the power of doing it is received from him; though there are many actions which he doth not make creatures do; yet there is no action in which he does not enable, or not give them sufficient power. But yet, notwithstanding this, we know that the natures of creatures are distinct from one another; and to say, that the divine power must do all, is to take away the distinction of natures wholly, and then a stone might reason as well as a man, and a tree might walk to and fro as well as a sensitive living creature: but God's way of dealing with creatures in the natural creation, ordinarily, is to act them according to, and co-work with that peculiar nature which he hath put into this, and that, and the other creature. So it is here; there is a divine nature, consisting of many gracious, holy, vital principles which God puts into the soul when he renews it; and which are so many several parts of the new creature, and with these several principles, or with this divine nature he concurs or co-works; though the exigency of the case is such, there being a corrupt nature joined therewith in the same subject, that here he must continually over-power unto every action that is done: and it is not enough to give, or maintain the principle, but he must work the very act itself, because of a reluctant principle, which would otherwise stran-

gle the act, and never let it be brought forth at all. But then we must not suppose that the power by which the work is done, is a thing only at this time given, and that there is no principle in the soul itself which it acts from; for there is a principle implanted and fixed in the soul, and though that requires to be acted, it is the way and method of the Spirit to act in and by that principle, or put that principle upon action. So that walking in the Spirit is walking in the exercise of the implanted principles of grace, and not without them, or not having any such work wrought or done in us; as if a person should be habitually inclined one way, and yet act another; believe, without a principle of faith; or love God, without a principle of love; or fear, without a principle of fear, by having these actions erected in him by the Spirit, without the habits from whence they are to proceed, and to which they are connatural. This is not to be supposed. And therefore whensoever any walk in the actual exercise of grace, they walk in the Spirit. And it is very observable to this purpose that you have several fruits of the Spirit, or gracious principles enumerated immediately before the text, ver. 22, 23. You are there told what the fruits of the Spirit are; or what the principles are which this Spirit is the productive cause of, and then it is afterwards subjoined, "If we live in the Spirit," or have all these principles, "let us also walk in the Spirit," that is, in acting and exercising these principles. Hence therefore we read of walking by faith, (2 Cor. 5. 7.) and walking in the fear of the Lord, (Acts 9. 31.) and walking with God, (Mic. 6. 8.) and of walking in love. Eph. 5. 2. To walk in the exercise of these several graces of the Spirit, is walking in the Spirit.

(6.) It implies walking in the way of the Lord with freedom of choice, and from a spontaneous inclination; from both the notion of walking, which is voluntary, and the addition in the Spirit, which is the great Author of all liberty wheresoever it is; Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty, 2 Cor. 3. 17. A person is not the less, but the more free by being impelled and moved by the Spirit; for it is the Spirit that makes him free and enlarges him: I will walk at liberty, says the Psalmist, for I keep thy precepts, psalm. 119. 46. And I will run the ways of thy commandments when thou shalt enlarge my heart, ver. 32.

(7.) It implies a continued reference to a rule. To walk in the Spirit is not to walk extravagantly, as those that know no measures or limits in their walking, and are as the wild ass used to the wilderness. Jer. 2. 24. It is opposed to walking after lust, or the inclinations of corrupt nature which you know is the only principle of all extravagancy. This I say, says the

apostle in the 16th verse of this chapter, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." The apostolical authority and majesty, which is imported in that solemn preface, is of very great remark and note. This I say, this I determine, this is one of the sacred *effata* and dictates which I pronounce to you in the name of the great God and Redeemer, whose office and authority I bear; "This I say, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." That Spirit will be a principle of holy order and regularity to you in all your walking: So the great promise of it implies in Ezek. 36. 27. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. You shall then be willing to walk in a prescribed way, the way that I line and rule out unto you all along.

(8.) It implies a complacential course of walking on in religion. Walking in the Spirit is walking cheerfully; it belongs to it, it is comprehended within the compass of it. Whenever any have the Spirit, this lies within their walk; it is part of that spiritual walk to be conversant, amidst consolations and joys and pleasures, and it is part of the signification of that expression, "Come let us walk in the light of the Lord." Light doth many times signify (besides knowledge, and holiness) joy, delight, pleasure. Walking is a motion for recreation, as you have heard; spiritual walking is a motion, if it be entirely in itself, amidst spiritual joys and comforts. The churches walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied, in the before-mentioned 9. Acts 31. That sure was walking in the Spirit. It is suitable to the way in which christians are to walk, which is throughout, in every part of it, a way of pleasantness, and a path of peace, Prov. 3. 17. It is the Spirit that causes holy ones to walk in this way, and then sure it works in them a disposition suitable to the way. And if the way is pleasant, and the heart is suitably disposed thereunto, it cannot but be pleasant walking, so far as that disposition is in that pleasant way.

(9.) It is a continuing in the course and practice of religion. For walking is a continued motion: and therefore they that are said to walk in the Spirit, do not begin in the Spirit, and then think to be made perfect by the flesh (as the expression is in Gal. 3. 3) but they continue in a course of spiritual motion.

(10.) Lastly. It imports a progress in spirituality. As was said before, there may be a continued motion that is not progressive; but walking in the Spirit imports a progressive motion in a course of spirituality. When persons make still nearer and nearer approaches unto their end, the term of their course; draw nearer and nearer to God, and as they draw

nearer to him, find a gradual influence of divine light and life and power, more discernable impressions of the divine image, grow more and more into a suitableness to him; are more acquainted with him, are brought unto higher delectation, and to take more complacency in him: this is walking in the Spirit; when a man's path, as it is said concerning the righteous man, is as the shining light, that shines more and more, brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day, Prov. 4. 18. As you know the nearer approach we make unto the light of a glorious lucid object, the more light we have, still all along as we go, our way grows more and more lightsome. And strength grows and increases too with the light, The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger, Job. 17. 9. There is an increase with the increase of God. They do not walk in the Spirit therefore who keep moving, but move in a circle, or in a round of empty sapless duties, keep up the formalities of religion, and no more; but they walk in the Spirit who make a progress, who go forward, who draw nearer and nearer unto God, and become more suitable and like him, and fit for his eternal converse, and for all the present service whereto he calls them.

SERMON XIII.*

IT is the latter part of the verse that we are upon, from which, considered in that reference which it carries to the former, we have observed.—That it belongs to the state of them, who are made alive by the Spirit of God, to walk in the Spirit.—We have proposed in speaking to this, to shew you,—what walking in the Spirit imports, and—how it belongs unto the state of living christians thus to walk.—The former we have already spoken to, and now go on to the other, namely

II. To evince to you, that it belongs to the state of those, that live in the Spirit, thus to walk in it. Now we are to shew you, that it belongs to the state of such, as a *privilege;* and therein, the part of the Holy Ghost to cause and conduct all the holy motions of renewed souls: and also, that it belongs to their state, as a *duty*, and therein we are to shew you our part. The motion of this or that thing, if it can be said to be its own motion as this is said to be ours (for we must "walk in the Spirit") signifies a part to be done by it; and we therefore have a part to do, in compliance with, and in subordination to the Spirit of God, in this thing. There cannot be walking in the Spirit, but there must be a concurrence of its part, and ours; its, according to its supremacy, and ours, according to our subordination. Under this second

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head therefore the demonstration will lie, how it belongs, or that it doth belong, to the state of renewed souls to walk in the Spirit; they may, and they ought. They may, so it speaks their privilege, and the readiness of the Spirit still to co-operate, according to what part is assigned it; they ought, so it speaks their duty; they ought so to walk, that is, so to demean and carry themselves, as that they may, according to the prescribed and appointed methods, make sure to themselves the help, and concurrent influence and co-operation of the Spirit through their course. Both these are plainly enough signified to us by the very words of the text itself; one, as implied, plainly enough implied, and the other more plainly expressed. And it will be necessary to speak unto them severally and distinctly.

1. Walking in the Spirit belongs unto the state of such as are spiritually alive, as a *privilege* proper thereunto. The injunction, "Walk in the Spirit," plainly supposes that the Spirit is communicable for this purpose, that walking in the Spirit is no impossible thing, that it is a thing which by a stated gracious vouchsafement appertains to the state of them to whom this charge is given. It is a known and unquestionable rule in such cases, that precepts and promises do imply one another: and such precept carries in it a virtual promise, any such promise carries in it a virtual precept. The precept supposes the promise, and the promise infers the precept, that is, an obligation to the thing in reference whereto such and such help is promised to be afforded. If it should be enjoined us to walk in the light of the sun, it is supposed that the sun doth ordinarily shine. There is a connection therefore manifestly implied here between the action that is enjoined us, and the supposed communication of the Spirit in order thereto; or its constant communicableness, or aptitude and readiness to communicate itself, according as walking in it doth require. For how harshly would it sound, to enjoin any one to make use of that wherewith he hath nothing at all to do; to use an incommunicable thing, a thing to which I have no pretence, to which I can lay no kind of claim! As if one should enjoin a child to do such or such a thing by the strength of a giant. It is implied that there are certain rules and methods, according whereunto, in a stated way, the Spirit is ready to communicate and give forth itself, in reference unto all those actions and motions, proper to the state of the renewed soul, which are comprehended, as you have heard, under the expression of walking.

The Spirit's part being that therefore which we have to consider and speak to in the *first* place, as pre-supposed;

there are two things that I shall do in reference to that. I shall shew you,—what communication of the Spirit is necessary unto our walking in it, and—the communicativeness of the Spirit, or its aptitude to communicate itself, unto this purpose, and according unto such necessity.

(1.) What communication of the Spirit is necessary unto this, that we may be said to walk in it. We have hinted to you already what communication is necessary, in telling you what walking in the Spirit implies. A communication both of light and power is necessary. Consider we both these. A communication of such light and such power, as are quite of another orb, and belong to another sphere than that of nature; a light that is more than natural, and a power that is more than natural: such light and power are necessary to our walking in the Spirit. We shall speak distinctly unto the one and the other of these.

[1.] Walking in the Spirit doth necessarily suppose a communication of spiritual light, or light from the Spirit, as the privilege of truly living christians, proper to their state, which the exigency of their case doth require and call for. This is of the very *primordia* (as I may speak) of the new creation, that great work of God upon the spirits of men, by which he doth new mould them both for obedience and blessedness. This light keeps within the sphere and verge of his own people, the people that he doth form for himself: O house of Jacob let us walk in the light of the Lord. Isa. 2. 5. It plainly means that directive light which is to guide the course of our walking, as you will see, if you look back unto the 3d verse of that chapter, "Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us his ways, and we will walk in his paths." That we may do so, it is necessary that he teacheth us his ways, and enlighten our ways, and, as it were, afford us a continual light through the whole course and tract of that way wherein we are to walk. This light is not merely an adventitious, uncertain thing, but a stated, settled thing. It is necessary that it be so in order to our walking in the Spirit. When God began this work of the new creation, the provision was, "Let there be light," that was the care that was taken in the old creation, to which the apostle doth manifestly allude in 2 Cor. 4. 6. God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. He, that at first made light shine out of darkness, in raising up and forming this old world, when he comes to raise the new creation out of the ruins of the old, in the spirits of men,

doth the same thing, and followeth the same method. He makes light to shine into those dark and desolate souls, that before were lost in darkness and death, that they may know which way to turn themselves, and to choose their way, what is to be done, and what is not to be done. We are not to think that this light, this more than natural light, is a thing separate from a vital and motive power and influence, but most inwardly and necessarily conjunct and connected therewith: as the light of the sun in reference to the sensible world is a vigorous light, a light which hath an influence accompanying it. And think we with ourselves, what a miserable desolation must presently ensue, not only darkness, but death too, if God should put out the sun, and that great luminary of heaven should become all on a sudden totally extinct! What a universal languor would there be upon universal nature, even all on a sudden! Such is the light unto the new world, the new creation of which I am speaking. That spiritual light, as was formerly intimated, is vital light, "light of life." Life is said to be light in that heretofore mentioned, John 1. 4. And when, in Eph. 5. 14. the words are directed unto souls that are asleep and buried, as it were, in death, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead," it is superadded what they were to expect from Christ; and one would think it should rather have been said, Christ shall give thee life; but it is said, "Christ shall give thee light," implying that to be a vital light, a light that carries life in it; and which, when he comes efficaciously and powerfully to awaken souls, and by his word make them arise, he must then infuse light and life together in one. Light is spoken of as the very composition of the new creature, as if it were a being all of light, "Ye were darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord," and this in reference to their walking as children of the light. Eph. 5. 8. They are made up of light, being born spirit of Spirit, as we had occasion formerly to note. The great and glorious God himself is called the God of light, they are called the children of light. That is their parentage. Light descended of light, begotten of light. "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." All converse with him is walking in the light as he is in the light, 1 John 1. 7.—It is true, that light signifies holiness, it necessarily connotes it; but then this only, as was heretofore intimated, doth import and signify, that that light, which goes into the composition of the new creature, is efficacious, refining, transforming light, such as makes the soul some way throughout suitable unto the motions of truth, which are now placed in the speculative understanding. Whereas the case is much otherwise with unchanged, unrenewed souls.

There is a discordancy, a disagreement between their habitual frame and temper, and the notions of truth which are in their minds. But when the notions of truth, and the frame and disposition of the heart come to be similar unto one another, then is the soul said to be, as it were, a being of light, it is all light. "Ye were darkness," so men are in their natural and degenerate state, all darkness, the very light that is in them is darkness, but when this change comes to be made, then are they "light in the Lord." Now that which is so natural, and is even in the very constitution of the new creature, must needs be a continual thing; and so must be continually maintained, and is maintained by a continual influence, or irradiation of light from the blessed Spirit upon the soul that it hath begot.

I might be here yet more particular, as it is not unnecessary to be, and shew you both in reference to what objects, and in reference to what acts, such light is needful for our walking in the Spirit.

First. In reference to what objects such light is necessary. What things are there to be discovered and made known to them that are capable of walking in the Spirit, in reference whereto such a light as this is necessary? Many objects we might speak of, if we would particularize, but we shall gather up things (because we intend to speak very briefly) under as general heads as we can.

It is necessary, first, that we have light in reference to the *end* towards which we are to act or move in this course. Spiritual walking, as you have heard, connotes an end; it is necessary that there be a spiritual light in reference to that end, unto which the course of this spiritual walking is, and ought to be directed. That end, you know, is no other than the blessed God himself, and him considered, as in Christ; for he is not otherwise accessible; and we are never to think a thought of moving or tending towards him, otherwise than in Christ, and through him. This light is necessary to reveal both the Father and the Son to us. "Shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." We need to have him shewn. The disciples acknowledged so much in John 14. 8. It is only in this light that we can see light. Ps. 36. 9. How strangely confused and blundering notions of God have they, who are destitute of this supervening additional light! Whatsoever objects they have, they are dim and without efficacy, and God is known as if he were not known. He hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true, and we are in him. 1 John 5. 20. And we are in him: the knowledge of God in Christ is that which unites, or draws the soul into union; and that is the understanding given; that is the additional, supervening

light. Whosoever sinneth, saith that same apostle, hath not seen God. 1 John 3. 6. ὁ κακοποιων, he that is *an evil doer;* (we cannot render it more strictly according to the letter than so) he hath not seen God; that is, he that is in an unregenerate state, he that yet lives a life of sin, he hath not seen God; no beam of true divine light hath ever yet shined in that wretched soul. As our Saviour tells the Jews in John 5. 37. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. Ye have not seen, ye have never found a right notion of God to any purpose. All that while persons are in a very ill condition for walking towards him, for moving and tending God-ward. A soul cannot move blindfold towards its end, but in the light, and with open eyes. And if men are alienated from the life of God, it is through the blindness of their hearts. Ephes. 4. 18. Persons therefore, who are brought to have a participation in the divine life, have a participation of the divine light at the same time to guide all the course of their motions and operations God-ward, and that continually supplied by his "Spirit of revelation." How strangely at a loss are persons to conceive of the excellencies and beauties of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom, and through whom we are to tend to God, till this light shine in upon them! The apostle prays in behalf of the Ephesians, that "God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him," that is, our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom he had spoken before, Ephes. 1. 17. As if he should have said, "You can never come to know him, to own and acknowledge him, (the word there used doth signify acknowledgment) to know him to purpose, unless the Spirit of wisdom and revelation be given you for that end." Others look upon him as one without form, without comeliness even when they see him, as the expression is to that purpose in Isa. 53. 2. Even while men see him, they see no beautiful object; no inviting, no captivating excellencies are beheld in him, nothing for which he is reckoned desirable from a practical judgment. The Spirit of wisdom and revelation therefore is necessary to this. And when we consider God our end, towards whom through Christ we are now to be moving, the principal consideration of him as our end, is in that state wherein we are finally to acquiesce and rest in him, that is, the future state of glory and blessedness. And how altogether unapprehensive of the attractive power of that end are those souls that are yet destitute of this life! Therefore, in that mentioned Ephes. 1. 18, the apostle prays for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to be given to the Ephesians, that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know the hope of their calling, and what is

the riches of the glory of the inheritance that God hath in his saints, or, among his saints, as it may be read; the glories of that state wherein the saints in common have a share. Our course is to be directed heaven-ward, walking in the Spirit; we are to walk towards heaven, that ought to be the tendency of our course all along: but how are they capable of walking heaven-ward, who are destitute of the inviting, alluring representations of it? And how impossible is it, that they should otherwise be had, than by this divine light? Things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which it enters not into the heart of man to conceive of, God has prepared for them that love him; and, as it follows, he hath revealed them to us by his Spirit, that Spirit which teaches the deep things of God. 1 Cor. 2. 9. 10. And if you carry on the discourse to the 12th verse, there you find, We have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. We come by this Spirit to have some right knowledge of the things that are freely given, which without this light we could never have known.

This light is necessary, secondly, to shew us our *way* from step to step. The spirituality of that duty which is required of us we can never understand aright without this Spirit. To know what it is to meet with God, what it is to obey out of love, what it is to be in a continual, profound subjection of Spirit unto the authority and law of an invisible God, we shall never understand these things, we shall never know them without this light. A regenerate man has the law of God, and an unregenerate man may have it too; but we find that in reference to that clearer light which the regenerate person is capable of, and is possessed of more or less, he hath need to have his eyes open to see what there is in that law: Open thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. Psalm 119. 18. There are wonders inclosed in the law of God, which an unregenerate man doth not dream of, which escape his ken, or come not within his notice. A regenerate person, one who is made spiritually alive, is brought in this respect, as into a new world; all things look with another face and aspect to him. He is said to be translated out of darkness into marvellous light, φως θαυμαστον *amazing light*, 1. Pet. 2. 9. When he once comes into that light, "Where am I!" saith he. "What a glorious light am I got into!" Look to the way in which he is to walk, and there is a lustre and glory upon it, which was never apprehended before; as, according to another attribute of the same way, it is said to be pleasant. The ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace, Prov. 3. 17. A carnal mind never apprehends any

pleasure in these ways, and so apprehends no glory, no amiableness in them.

This light is necessary, thirdly, in reference to the proper *motives* of this walking. There are such things. Indeed they lie very much in the objects themselves, but we may frame, concerning some, a diverse consideration of motives; and besides those that are in the objects; that is, respect the spiritual and divine objects, they are desirable for themselves, and accordingly, the object is a motive; but there are accessary and supervening motives; as it is a very great motive to betake ourselves unto this region of spirituality, of spiritual light, and life and motion, to cast an eye upon this our world, and behold the vanity, the nothingness of it, and all things that do belong unto this *compages* or frame. There needs this spiritual, divine light to behold that. A carnal man can never make a right judgment, to the purpose, of the vanity of the creature, of the emptiness and nothingness of all things under the sun. But to one that lives in the divine light, that walks and is conversant there, what a fleeting, despicable shadow is all this world, this frame of sensible things, that is vanishing under his eye! He sees how the fashion of it is passing away; and by how much the more he is weaned hereby, and disengaged from it, so much the more is he at liberty for this spiritual walk which we speak of. By how much the more he gets out of the entangling snares of death that are below, so much the more is his way above, as the way of the wise is; so much the more is he conversant in that path, that unknown way, which the "vulture's eye hath not seen, and which the lion's foot hath not trod;" that way of wisdom, or holiness, or life, so much spoken of in Job 28.

This light is necessary, fourthly, in order to the knowledge of *ourselves*. We can never walk in the Spirit if we have not some competent discerning of ourselves; and we can never know the weaknesses, the wants, the wiliness and deceit of our own spirits without the divine light. To be conversant therein is necessary to all such purposes, and in reference to our making a discovery of whatsoever is needful to be discovered concerning the state, and posture, and temper, and ordinary ways and methods of our souls.

Secondly, The acts in reference whereto such light is necessary are these:

It is necessary, first, in reference to the act of *apprehension*. We cannot so much as apprehend clearly and with distinction the things which are needful for us to apprehend, without this light of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation given for these purposes.

In reference unto the acts of *consideration* it is necessary, secondly, that we have this light to converse and walk in. Otherwise we can have no steady discerning of any thing. For consideration is nothing else but knowledge continued, or the often repeated acts of apprehension, varied this way and that, according to the various representations of the object about which I am now employing my mind. In reference to such an act of vision as this, that is, steady, intent vision, there needs steady light. I cannot have a steady view of a thing by a flashy and evanid light, Walking therefore in the Spirit doth require a continued light of the Spirit to be afforded me, because I have constant need to go with my eyes in my head all along, and to consider and ponder my way from step to step, from point to point, but without such a steady light, as may, as it were, determine my eye to such and such objects needful to be considered : alas ! how incapable is it of looking with a steady intuition, that is, of thinking composedly of any thing which it most concerns me to think of. Can we command our own thoughts ? Consult we our experience ; we can no more do it, than " gather up the winds in our fists." But the Spirit in this way of operation, holds them steady by a commanding light, which keeps them, as it were under its own government, "Look hither," and so doth determine and fix the eye to that which I am called now to consider. Whence you have that experience pronounced and spoken out, We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal, 2 Cor. 4. 18. The word which is here rendered *look* signifies *to take aim at*, σκοπουντων ἡμων. That is a very steady intuition which a man hath of the mark which he is aiming at, or the end which he designs ; he must always have it in his eye. And, by this looking, saith the apostle, " we find that notwithstanding, all the decays of the outward man the inward is renewed day by day," life and vigour and spirit continually entering in at our eyes from that glorious aim which we have before us. This will need a very steady determination of mind unto such objects by a commanding light and glory that they carry with them, so as that the soul feels not a disposition in itself to direct or look off.

This light is necessary, thirdly, in order to the act of *dijudication*, that is, distinguishing or discerning between things and things, what is of great value and account, and to be chosen, and what is worthless, and to be neglected ; what is to be done, and what is not to be done. There is a continual need through the whole course of our spiritual walk for the using of such a discretive judgment between things and things, and in reference

hereto, there needs a continual emanation of the Holy Ghost: for otherwise, we put good for evil, and evil for good; light for darkness, and darkness for light; bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. That sense which should be exercised to distinguish between good and evil, is from the blessed Spirit, residing in our eye, putting continually fresh vigour in it, that we may be able by quickness of sight to discern or see, here is somewhat to be closed with, here is somewhat to be refused; this will be good, that will be noxious. The apostle doth on this account pray (and that is a plain intimation to us, that it is the office and work of the Spirit of God to do the thing that he there speaks of; he prays) on the behalf of the Philippians, in chap. 1. 9, 10 that their love might abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment. So we read it; but the word rendered *judgment* is capable of being rendered *sense* (παση αισθήσει, *in all sense*) "I pray that you may have your spiritual senses in exercise; that you may have a judicious distinguishing sense" For what? Why, "that ye may approve things that are excellent;" so it follows, or as the words there may be read, to distinguish the things that differ. You are otherwise likely to be imposed upon, if the Spirit take not that particular care of you, by the deceitful appearances of things.

In order, fourthly, to the act of *determination*, or coming to a determinative judgment, as we do upon comparing things, and noting the difference between one and another. We need the Spirit's help here, to shine with that vigorous and powerful light into the mind, as to bring our judgments to a right determination, for the rule and government of our practice, which are apt to be long hovering and in suspense, if they do not hastily determine amiss. You have the apostle expressing his own determining judgment, in a particular, but very important case in Rom. 8. 18. "I reckon," saith he; the word which he makes use of, is a word from whence we borrow the name of *logic*, λογιζομαι, I do compute, or I am, by reason, come at last unto this definitive and positive judgment, "that the sufferings of this present time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." That there should be such a positive, determinative judgment as that which should have the power to be influential upon his course, and directive of it, do you think he was not beholden to the illumination of the Holy Ghost? He doth not speak like a doubtful, uncertain man, or one that did not know what to choose, or how to steer his course. "For my part, saith he, I thus judge; I am at a point, having viewed the case round, inspected it narrowly and thoroughly, and considered all about it that is to be considered, and I say, that

these two things, the sufferings of time, and the glories of eternity are not to be named in the same day, there is no compare between them." In order to such a determination of the mind as this, it is plain this light must necessarily come in; and there can be nothing of greater moment to the whole course of our walking in the Spirit than such a determinative judgment.

You see therefore that a communication of *light* from the Spirit is necessary to our walking in the Spirit. A communication of power is necessary to the same purpose too; but of that in the next discourse.

SERMON XIV.*

I Am now to shew you,

[2.] That a communication of spiritual *power* is also necessary that we may be capable of walking in the Spirit. It is said that they who shall walk in such a course as this is "without weariness," must in order thereto "renew their strength," and this strength is to be from a divine communication, because it is that which we are to wait upon the Lord for, Isa. xl. 31. We hear of a strength in the inner man given and sought for, which implies it capable of being given, for this purpose. The Psalmist speaks his experience of its being given in psalm 138. 3. In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. And the apostle prays that it might be given unto the Ephesians, (chap. 3. 16.) that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, &c. You will never be able to act that faith wherewith to keep up any converse with Christ, or by which he can have any commodious reception in your souls, so as to dwell there, if you are not strengthened according to the riches of his glory with might by his Spirit in the inner man, in order thereunto.

That we may speak a little more distinctly to this, it will

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be requisite to shew you,—what kind of influence, or communication of power will *not* be sufficient in this case: and then, —what is, over and beside that, necessary, as what *will* suffice for this purpose.

First, What will *not* suffice. It is requisite that you have a right, and as clear an account as is possible of this.

For first, It will not be sufficient to have only that *common power* afforded to us, which doth suffice for common, natural action: whether by that power we understand the faculties belonging to the reasonable nature, or whether you do also comprehend therewith the promptitude and aptitude of those faculties for common actions. This will not suffice for spiritual actions, so that we may be said to walk in the Spirit. Which may easily be made to appear from such considerations as these. Namely,

If only such a communication of power were sufficient, then no more influence is afforded unto *regenerate* persons than to the *rest* of men. For they have a power which doth enable them to the common actions which belongs to them as men, as reasonable creatures; which doth enable them, not which doth constrain them; or make them do many actions which yet they do. And again,

Then there were as much power and influence afforded and given forth, in order to *sinful* and forbidden actions, as in order to *good* and holy, and commanded ones, which it were very unreasonable and horrid to think, as we shall have occasion to shew you by and by. In reference to the latter, such an influence goes forth, as by which God doth procure that they shall be done, or makes them to be; but sure we will not dare to say concerning forbidden actions, that he makes them to be done, though he gives such a power as by which they may, and can be done; otherwise indeed it were impossible they should be done, namely, if power were not derived from him. Further,

Otherwise it might *be possible* that no *good action* should ever be done; and consequently that no person should be saved, or finally happy. Of so great concernment it is carefully to distinguish between that common power, by which such and such actions *may* be done, and that power by which, such and such actions *must*, and *shall* be done, or shall be procured to be done. And again,

Otherwise it were not only possible that no spiritual and holy actions might be done, but *impossible* that any should. For it is not only impossible that any action should be done without power, but it is impossible also that any action should be done without a power proportionable to the kind and nature of

that action. And since merely natural power is altogether unproportionable unto the kind of holy and spiritual actions, it would be equally absurd to say that such actions could be done by so improper a power, as to say, that an action can be done by no power at all. If you assign an unproportionable power to any action, it is a perfect equivalence to no power; for it is no power as to this purpose. As a power to walk is no power proportionable unto the offices and functions of a reasonable soul, so that common power by which such and such natural actions may be done, is no way proportionable unto spiritual actions, which it is undertaken shall be done, which must be done, in order to their blessedness in the other world, and their glorifying God in this, who are designed at length, even of the Spirit, to receive life everlasting, Gal. 6. 8.

And in the last place, If common natural power were all that is requisite in this case, then no *exercise of grace*, or no actual grace could be said to be *the gift of God*, and consequently, it must be denied to be grace: for what is grace but a divine gift? Common natural power in reference unto these actions whereunto it is adequate, never infers that those actions are to be referred to God as given by him. And it may very easily be made to appear to you, that the supposition of a power only for spiritual actions, (that is, the natural faculty) though you suppose never so much promptitude for common action, which is to be made use of even in these, could not leave us ground whereupon to call such and such exercises of grace divine gifts. For it would be very absurd to give the name of the thing done, or to be done, to the power that must be used in the doing of it. If we might suppose that at all tolerable, then we must suppose that, because all men have natural faculties which must be made use of in believing, and have a promptitude for many other actions, which are some way congenerous, or of like kind, all men are believers. If it can be enough to say that God is the giver of faith, because he gives the natural faculties which are to be made use of in believing, then we must say that he hath given faith to all the world, and consequently since all believers shall be saved, we must say too, that all the world shall be saved. Yea, if there were not an aversion unto this same work of faith, for instance, which is to be otherwise overcome, it were yet altogether improper so to speak, namely, that the power of believing is believing, that is, the natural power to be used for a purpose, which the spiritual power doth suppose. For you might every whit as well say, that the power of building a house, is a house; and the power, which is to be used in fighting, is a battle; the absurdity of which

phrases, or forms of speech is obvious to every one at the first view.

And if this were sufficient to say, that such and such acts or exercises are the gifts of God, because that natural power, which is presupposed in order thereto, and must be used therein, is given by him, then we might as well call the fruits of the flesh the gifts of God, as the fruits of the Spirit. For (as hath been intimated before) that power by which any sinful or fleshly act can be done, must be supposed to have had a divine original, or else no such act could have been done, God being the fountain of all power whatsoever. And all acts *ad extra*, all operations that are any where put forth towards the creature are common to the persons of the Trinity, and are indeed expressly attributed to the Spirit of God. By his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens, (Job 26. 13.) and reneweth the face of the earth, Psalm. 104. 30. Upon this supposition therefore the very distinction would be taken away between the fruits of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit, which we see the text hath an express reference to; and those who do the most vile of those fleshly acts might all that while be said to walk in the Spirit as those who do the best actions imaginable. That natural power therefore which is sufficient for actions in common is not sufficient there.

Nor secondly, is the *addition of gracious habits* sufficient to our walking in the Spirit, or our doing spiritual actions. There must be an influence beyond that by which such habits are given and infused. For,

Those habits themselves could not subsist without a *continual influence*: especially, it being considered, they that are in the souls of sinful, corrupt, degenerate men even at the best. They are in soils which are not natural to them. They are foreign plants, and do so much the more need a continual preservative influence. As heat which is introduced into water, because it is not natural unto that water, therefore needs to be continually cherished by a fire maintained and kept under it; and if the influence of the external agent, the fire without, were not continued to maintain the heat within, it would soon vanish, and the coldness, which is natural to the water, would recover itself. Which argues that that quality which is foreign, and from without, needs a continual influence from without to maintain it. But that is not all, for

Beside the influence which is necessary to maintain such habits, there is an influence necessary *to act them* in a renewed soul; otherwise they would not be acted. For these habits are in conjunction with contrary habits which would impede the other from going forth into act: which we do not need to

reason with you much about, because we find the matter so expressly asserted in Scripture, even this very Gal. 5. 17. Ye cannot do the things that ye would. And why? because the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and these two, saith the apostle, are contrary the one to the other. And here it seems more reasonable to understand by Spirit, the new nature, the new creature, which you have heard is called Spirit, in John 3. 6. And for that very reason is the injunction given in the 16 verse of this chapter, to walk in the Spirit. "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, &c." He speaks to those whom he supposes to be furnished with the habits of grace, and yet they could not act for all that, unless they did walk in the Spirit; and therefore walking in the Spirit must import more on the Spirit's part, than only its furnishing the soul, with gracious habits added to natural powers. And for my part, I dare not venture to say, what many do, that the apostle speaks of himself, in Rom. 7. as in a state wherein he was destitute of grace, when he so expressly says, that how to perform that which is good he did not find. Sure he was not without the habits of grace when he said this, yet though he had the habits of grace, there were times in which he could not find to do the things that were good. Such habits therefore do need farther influence than what doth infuse and maintain them, by which they may be capable of being brought forth into act. And therefore

Secondly, We shall next lay down what *is necessary* and will be sufficient in this case that spiritual actions may be done, and so that we may be truly said to walk in the Spirit. And such an influence is necessary, and would be sufficient for this purpose as will be so efficacious as to direct and determine and over-rule the heart into the doing of this and that particular action, so that it may not only be said, as concerning common actions, such an action may be done by such a natural power put forth, but this action shall be done. In short, such an influence, as by which a person is not only enabled to do such an action, but is made to do it; or by which the action is procured to be done: so that the very production of the action is referable unto the divine influence in this case, as that whereunto it doth actually enable and determine the doer. And that so much is necessary unto every spiritual and holy action we shall prove to you from several scripture-considerations.

We remark first, holy souls are wont to *disclaim* any sufficient ability to do a good action. They say that it is not in them: that if a good action be done, it is not they that have done it by any power that was either natural to them, or superadded diverse and distinct from that, but by the issue and

communication of a power from God when it was done. See how they speak unto this purpose. Look into 2. Cor. 3. 5. Thinking a good thought is as little a good action as any one you can suppose or think of, but for that, saith he, "we are not sufficient of ourselves." That great apostle had not yet got a sufficiency into his own hand, by all his light and knowledge, and by all his habitual grace, for so much as the thinking a good thought; Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God. You find his state again in that before-mentioned Rom. vii. 5. 21. When I would do good, evil is present with me; so ver. 18. how to perform that which is good I find not. There was a natural power, and there were habits of grace, but yet there was wanting that present, actual, over-powering determination to the doing of this good action which we have told you is farther necessary.

It is evident secondly, the blessed God himself, who knows us better than we do ourselves, doth expressly deny us to have that ability, an ability to act otherwise than as it is supplied and given still from time to time. Without me ye can do nothing, saith our Lord to his disciples in John 15. 5. He means it apparently of spiritual actions; for the expression is expository of that of bearing fruit, by which they should appear to be his disciples, and such fruits as for which sap and influence was to be derived from him the vine. As though he had said, "There cannot be a good action done without me."

And thirdly, the people of God, as they disclaim it in reference to themselves, so they *ascribe* it to God. When they have done any good action, they own it to have been from him; as David in his own and the people of Israel's behalf in 1. Chron. 29. What a solemn and joyful thanksgiving to God is there upon this account, that he enabled them to offer willingly! That willingness of obligation is acknowledged unto God. Yea, they ascribe it to God that even such an action may be done; By thee will we make mention of thy name, (Isa. 26. 13.) implying that they could not so much as make serious mention of God, without God.

And fourthly, as they ascribe it to God, so God *claims it* to himself. He had denied it concerning them, and they deny it of themselves; they ascribe it to God, and God assumes it to himself. He claims it as a thing appropriate and belonging to him to be the author of any good action that is done by any of his. How plain is that passage in Phil. 2. 13. It is God who worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure. Not the inclination only is from him, as it is the purpose of the habit to incline to this or that thing, but even the

action itself; he works it. And so the apostle speaks concerning christians in common in Phil. 1. 29. that it is given to them to believe; not only the principle, but the act of faith is said to be the gift of God; for to believe is the act of faith. It is given not only to believe but to suffer, that is, the act of faith and the act of patience, the exercise of both the one and the other are given things. And it is very remarkable to this purpose that God doth therefore promise that he would be the Author unto his people of their good works which they shall do by his Spirit. You see it is the tenour of his covenant in Ezek. 36. 27. I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. Sure this is a peculiar thing and different from what can be said of many other sorts of action, but concerning this sort of action he causes the very doing of the thing. Nothing can be more plain.

We may farther argue it, fifthly, from the *reference* which holy and good actions have unto that same rank and order of things unto which spiritual habits and principles do belong. Take you such a sphere of good things, include good habits within that compass, and you must include good actions within it too; and then, if one be from God, the other must be from him, for every such good and perfect gift is from above, James 1. 17. Now will I say, if an act of grace, or a holy spiritual action be a good action, then it is from God, as that which he causes, or which he may be said to give; it is a gift of his grace: and we cannot say that the habit is a spiritual good thing, and that the act is not, when as the habit is in order to the act, and were otherwise useless. And if habitual grace be a good thing, we may upon that account say, that actual grace, or the exercise of grace, is better, because it is that to which the other is subordinate, and to which it serves, and therefore may with the greatest certainty and clearness be concluded to be a divine gift.

We may farther argue, sixthly, from the *analogy* which there is between the *direct* and the *reflex* actions of a christian. For consider the reflex actions, by which he looks in upon himself, and takes notice of such and such things wrought and done in him, and concludes his relation to God, as a child; how are these reflex acts wrought? By the Spirit of God, bearing witness with our spirits; and you must suppose it to be the superior in this work, as it belongs to it to be. It must then be proportionably so in reference to the direct acts of a christian too. That is, If I cannot know without the Spirit's testimony witnessing with my spirit, that I am a child of God; then I cannot do the direct actions which are proper to

a child, without that Spirit overruling and acting my spirit in that case. I cannot believe, I cannot love &c.

We may yet again argue, seventhly, from the many *apostolical prayers*, which we find scattered up and down in the epistles, by which actual grace, or grace in exercise is implored for the christians unto whom they were written. Certainly such prayers were not impertinent or improper. Do but look into some of those passages briefly. In 2 Thes. 3. 5. the apostle prays that God would direct their hearts into the love of himself, and into the patient waiting for Christ. These were acts of grace, loving himself, and expecting the appearance of his Son; why, the Lord, saith he, direct your hearts thereinto, or determine them unto this very thing. It would be very strange to suppose that a man's heart should need such direction or determination unto another sort of actions; that is, that I should as much need that God should determine it to hate him, unto which my heart is so propense and inclined of itself: but as to such spiritual actions as these, you see the exigency of the case is such, as to make such a prayer as this very proper, "Lord, direct their hearts into the love of thee, direct their hearts into the expectation of thy Son." It is plain then that the very acts were referred unto the divine productive power, or determinative influence, not the bare inclination. And the apostle prays also for the Colossians, in Col. 1. 9, 10. that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; that expression walk (by which you have heard in the opening of that term in the text, acting, or exercising of grace is to be understood) he explains, as we did, by working; being fruitful in every good work—strengthened with all might, &c. The like also you find in the epistle to the Hebrews chap. 13. ver. 20, 22. The apostle there supplicates the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, that he would make them perfect in every good work to do his will. Here is still the action, the exercise of grace, in reference unto which it is matter of prayer to God, that God would make them do so and so, or efficaciously determine their spirits unto such actions.

We may argue from hence, lastly, that the Scripture makes certain discernable characters to be as it were impressed on such and such actions, namely, those that are spiritual and holy, as by which it might be known that God was the Author of them. To give you an instance in that one expression in John 3. 20, 21. The form of expression may lie thus, in reference to what had been before spoken concerning the light, that light in which every one must be understood to walk, that

walks holily, or in the Spirit, as you have before heard. He who so walks, in such light, comes to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God. A true light will make it manifest that such and such works are wrought in God. It is therefore necessarily supposed that they are some discriminative characters between works and works, and that those which God makes men do are distinguishable by the divine light, from those which he never doth so entitle himself to; that holy and spiritual actions, in short, may be said to have been wrought in God.

And it highly concerns us to consider, whether indeed the course and tenour of our actions is capable of having this said concerning it. Looking over the course of my conversation, can I say, "My works have been wrought in God; bring them to the light, and it will appear that they are wrought in God?" Even those works wherein we have immediately to do with him, the works and duties of religion themselves. O! can we say, that they are works wrought in God? "I have been so carried out in prayer, as that I could find this prayer was wrought in God; and so carried out in meditation, and conferring with my own heart, in self-thoughts, that bring these into the light, and I can discern that they were wrought in God; the impress of the divine hand and power is visible upon them?" Alas! how plainly convictive would the light which we have among us be concerning most of our works, that they are not wrought in God, that they are done at a very great distance from God, and that we have had little commerce with God in them! That little walking in the Spirit that appears even among those who profess religion at this day, is a great testimony against us, that God hath little to do by his Spirit with the government of our lives; that is, we do not put ourselves under it, and resign ourselves to it. (As when we come to speak of our own part in this matter we shall have occasion to shew; though there we are acted too.) The vanity and the deadness of our spirits, the formality, the licenticusness and the extravagancies of our spirits, alas! they too plainly shew that we do not walk in the Spirit, and that our works are not wrought in God. There is not a religion living amongst us, which is God-wrought, whereunto we can entitle him as the Author of it.

It was therefore necessary to insist, as we have done, in letting you understand what dependance we must have upon an immediate influence, as to every good work, which leaves not our spirits undetermined or at loose, but, they being averse to every thing of that kind, oversways them thereinto. It was necessary, I say, that the truth in this matter should be

held forth to us, because I am very much persuaded, that this is the great worm at the root of religion this day. Faith in the eternal Spirit is not acted to draw forth that life and influence which would make our religion a living, active thing, and hold it forth lovely and beautiful in the eyes of the world. Therefore it is that we are such languishing creatures as to the business of religion, and as to all spiritual actions, because it is not enough understood that all these works must be wrought in us and for us. For if that were understood, we should not be so self-confident as we are, when we go to duties, and concerning the government of our conversations, to cover ourselves with a covering that is not of God's Spirit, and make up to ourselves a texture of religion which it never wrought for us, never put on us: nor should we be so inobservant of the motions and breathings of that Spirit, make so little of them, call for them so seldom, and complain so little when there is a cessation, a retraction of that influence from us in any measure. Certainly our judgments have need to be rectified about this matter, and actual thoughts to be revived in our hearts, that we cannot move a step in our spiritual way and walk without the help of this Spirit; that it must do all in us and for us. Whilst this is not understood and considered, we wander, and live apart from God, and Christ, and his Spirit, as if we could choose our own way, and do all, that is needful for us to do, of ourselves; and so we betray ourselves into ruin and death, when we should be soaring aloft in that way which is the way of the wise. For we are not to think (as we shall have occasion to shew) that because this Spirit governeth our way by a strong, that therefore it doth it by a violent hand. No! but in a certain method which it hath prescribed and wherein it must act with our concurrence: otherwise we could not be said to walk in the Spirit, but should be merely passive, stupid blocks, and no more. We should no more walk than a stone walks, when it is moved to roll by a violent hand.

SERMON XV.*

WE are shewing how it belongs to the state of regenerate persons to walk in the Spirit, and have hitherto considered it as a privilege agreeable to their state. They *may* do so. We have proposed to shew the extent of this privilege, or what communications of the Spirit must be understood to lie within the compass of it; and the attainableness of it, or how ready the Spirit is to give forth these communications according as the case shall require. As to the former of these, we have shewn that the privilege consists in these two things, namely, A communication of spiritual light, and a communication of spiritual power. Both these have been spoken to, and we may refer unto either, or unto both of them, not only such a communication as is necessary for the operations of grace, but even the comforting and consolatory communications also, which are sometimes spoken of under the name of light, "light in the Lord;" and sometimes under the name of strength and power, as when the joy of the Lord, is said to be "the strength of his people."

But we pass over unto the next head, namely.

(2.) To shew the attainableness of the Spirit; or how apt the blessed Spirit of God is to communicate and give forth such influence, as the case doth require, that they who live in the Spirit, may be capable of walking in the Spirit. And here it

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is necessary,—to clear to you the sense, and then,—to evince the truth, of what we do now assert, namely, that unto all those to whom the Spirit hath been the Author of a new, divine life, it is ready to communicate and give forth all needful influence, in order to their suitable walking. In reference to the former of these we shall give you some explicatory propositions, and in reference to the latter some demonstrative considerations.

[1.] For the clearing of the sense of what is asserted, take these few propositions.

First, When we say that the Spirit is ready to communicate itself for such purposes, or for that general purpose which has been expressed, of our walking in the Spirit, the meaning is, that it is ready to do so in a stated and constant course, and not that it doth so only sometimes, very rarely, and now and then. For it were not to be imagined that this should lie as a stated, constant precept upon all christians, "walk in the Spirit," if the supposed ground thereof were intercepted, and to be but rarely found actually in being. Walking is a continued thing, (as we formerly intimated) and imports the constant and settled course of a christian's life or practice; and therefore there were no sufficient ground upon which such an obligation as this could be inferred upon the christian, if the influence of the Spirit in order thereto were exhibited but very rarely.

Secondly, We must understand that therefore there are certain rules according whereto the blessed Spirit (though as we find it is called in Scripture, a free Spirit) is come under obligation that it will be present, by a vital, active influence, as the great Author and Director of that course of holy motion unto which renewed ones are more immediately engaged. We must suppose that there is a connexion between their observance of such and such rules, and the Spirit's communicating and giving forth its influence according to those rules. This for explication I now lay down only in the general; what those rules are we shall have occasion distinctly to tell you, when we come to the second general head, namely, to treat of our part in this matter, or how walking in the Spirit belongs to the state of souls spiritually alive as a duty.

Thirdly, When we speak of the Spirit's being so obliged, you must understand it in reference to a regenerate subject. For within these bounds our text doth confine us: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Living in the Spirit is supposed. We cannot suppose that it should have annexed and tied its communications unto the actions, or the endeavour of any other sort of persons that lie without this

compass. To such as are got into the sphere of life, are within this verge, and have actual union with the Mediator, who is the spring and treasury of all spiritual life, and in whom all the promises, all the ties and obligations that the blessed God hath brought himself under any way, are yea, and amen; to such, I say, we must understand that this influence is in this stated way to be communicated, and may be expected. It is very true that others have no cause to despair, but these have cause and ground to believe. They have no cause to despair, because this Spirit is, as hath been said, a free Spirit, and, as "the wind bloweth where it listeth," none can tell but it may, one time or another, cast a favourable breath even on them. But these have reason to be confident, for the communications, of which we speak, are part of his portion, and a privilege belonging unto their state. We only add in the

Fourth place, that whereas we told you, that the communications of the Holy Ghost, due unto this purpose, do comprehend both the influences of grace and of comfort, we must understand this obligation to be more in reference to the former, than to the latter, to what concerns the being of gracious operations than the well-being. It is true, there is somewhat of comfort involved in the very nature of a gracious act, according as it is wont to be said concerning natural acts, that they all are pleasant, or carry a kind of pleasantness with them; so those acts which are connatural to the new-creature, have a pleasure in them, which we cannot separate even from those acts of that kind which seem to import most of vigour and severity; as the very acts of repentance and self-denial, if they be in their own kind, vital acts, proceeding from the Spirit of grace, and from the new nature put into the soul. One might appeal to the experience of christians, whether they do not find pleasure in melting before the Lord, pleasure in abandoning and quitting all that is dear to them, when they can fully do it, for his sake, and upon his account. Such consolation therefore as is intrinsical to any gracious act must be distinguished from that consolation which follows afterward upon reflection, or our taking a review of such and such gracious characters, discriminative tokens, discernable upon ourselves, and by which we can judge of our case. For the other pleasure is without intervening judgment, the acts are pleasant in themselves, even before we come to reflect, or take notice, or consider any thing concerning our states, whereof they are, or any thing else discernable in ourselves may be understood to be, characteristical. In reference to the consequential consolations we must understand the Spirit to have reserved to itself a liberty; it is more arbitrary in communications of that kind, and

doth upon mere sovereignty many times retract and withhold that kind of light for ends best known to itself. But in reference to those operations which are essential to the divine life, we must suppose that it hath a fixed and stated course, in which its influence shall be communicated in order to it. Our next business therefore is,

[2.] To add several considerations by which the truth of the thing assented may be manifested. And the

First consideration that occurs, is what hath been suggested to you already, in clearing the ground of the observation which we took up, namely, That we find it enjoined and laid as a command upon those who live in the Spirit, that they walk in the Spirit. For, as you were heretofore told; it would be very strangely unreasonable to enjoin one to walk, in the sun-shine at midnight. And we find that this precept of walking in the Spirit is not dropped, as it were, as a casual thing, but even in this very chapter it is urged and pressed, and with a great deal of solemnity. As you see in the 16th ver. This I say then, walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. It is introduced here with a solemn preface, This I say; as though he had said, "I understand myself in what I say, I do not speak rashly and at random." And with how great apostolical authority is the precept ushered in! This I say, Walk in the Spirit. We cannot suppose that so solemn a charge should have been laid, if this had not been a certain thing, that the Spirit shall be communicated, its influences shall issue and go forth, as far as is necessary for this purpose, unto the persons that are concerned. We find particular precepts given again and again unto the same purpose; as to instance in that spiritual action, or operation of prayer, we read of praying in the Holy Ghost; Jude 20. and praying always in the Spirit, and of worshipping God in the Spirit, as a stated thing, Eph. 6. 18. Phil. 3. 3. It is manifest that the apostle speaks of what was so, and not of what was very rare and occasional. So the charge, Walk in the Spirit, comprehends in it all duty, duty that is to run through our whole course, and intimates plainly that there is a communication of the Spirit always ready to go forth. The thing which is hinted in that other precept, which doth but in terms and expression differ from this, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do, of his good pleasure, Phil. 2. 12, 13. That word κατεργαζεσθε, imports, "labour it out even till it be finished; till you come to the very end of your faith, the salvation of your souls." This too is an injunction, which exceeds its ground, if we do not suppose that the following words are to

be understood in a proportionable sense, "God worketh in you to will and to do," that is, he is always ready to do so unto the finishing of your salvation.

Secondly. We may consider to this purpose that christians are severely blamed when holy and spiritual actions are not done in the proper time and season of them; which would not be charged upon them, if the Spirit were only arbitrarily suspended and withheld so far as was necessary to any such spiritual action. The inactivity, the sloth, the omissiveness of the necessary duty in the season of it, the sluggish performance, the decays and languors that are upon the spirits of christians are charged upon themselves, and, no doubt, most justly, and most righteously so. See but that one instance in Rev. 2. 4, 5. Nevertheless, I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of its place, except thou repent. Why, if the case were not as we now suppose it, it would only be the unhappiness of a soul to be left destitute of vigour and vital active power, not a crime. But we find it charged with great severity as a crime, that there are declinings from the first love, and that the things are not done, which have been done heretofore. Do we think that God would ever have left the matter so as that the case should admit of this reply? "It is true, the things which have been done heretofore, are not done now, but it is none of my fault, for there was no influence to be had, which was most necessary for the doing of them. My first love is lost, I do not love with that fervour, and life and strength as heretofore; but it is no fault of mine, the Spirit did arbitrarily retire, without my iniquity or transgression, upon which this languor is come upon me." We must understand more of consistency in the precepts, and criminations, and communications of the wise and holy God, than to imagine there was place or room left for such explications.

Thirdly. That the Spirit is apt to communicate itself unto renewed souls for such purposes, we may farther argue from hence, that it always can do it without any prejudice to itself. There is an all-sufficient fulness and plenitude of Spirit; it is a perpetual spring which this influence is to go forth from. And therefore whilst these communications can be afforded without any kind of prejudice, it is not to be supposed (the case being as it is, between it and its own offspring, regenerate souls) but that they will, but that they are, always ready to be given forth: and we are sure that its fulness admits of no abatement by all its communications. The sun hath lost no-

thing of its warmth and influence by spending it upon the world for almost six thousand years together: much less can infinite fulness suffer diminution. I argue,

Fourthly, from hence, that divine influence doth go forth unto all creatures, and is exhibited unto all natures, according as is needful for their proper and connatural actions, and therefore certainly it will not be withheld from the new creature, and the new nature, so far as is necessary for the actions which are suitable to that. For this would be as strange a supposition, as if one would imagine a prince to be mighty liberal in all his provisions for his servants, but apt to starve his own children, the issue of his body: this is a most unsupposable thing. It is by an influence originally divine, that every creature is enabled to act whatsoever it acts; enabled, not made to act in many cases, but enabled. It is by a divine influence that every plant and tree brings forth after its kind, that the sun shines, that the fire burns, that all actions are done, and all motions set on foot that are any where to be found through the world. He gives to all breath and being: and all things live, and move, and have their being in him. He feeds the ravens, he feeds the sparrows, he takes care of the lilies, and do we think he will starve and famish the souls which he hath made to live spiritually, so as that they cannot be able to act, or have power to move or stir this way or that, in any holy or spiritual action? This is a thing never to be supposed.

Fifthly. The communicativeness of the Spirit upon this account is hence to be argued, that it is always before-hand with us in its communications. It communicates more than we improve. A very great argument this, that it is not unapt to communicate. Indeed the case is most observably so in the natural world, as I may speak; that is, that active power and principle that works to and fro throughout, doth in proportion much exceed the passive and receptive capacity. Nothing is more evident. The light and influence of the sun would suffice many thousand such earths; this earth is too narrow and too limited a thing to receive and improve all the light and influence of the sun. And then as to what falls upon this earth itself, how much is there of seminal virtue that is lost, as it were, from year to year? As much as might suffice, for ought we know, for ten such earths as this, supposing that all seminal virtue should come to be actually prolific of what is like it in kind. The case is most manifestly so, as to spiritual influences and communications; we are not straitened there, the straitness and narrowness is in the subject, in ourselves, and that blessed

Spirit always goes beyond us. It is a convictive appeal that the prophet makes in Mic. 2. 7. O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? It argues that there is some defect, some indisposition, or incapacity in the subject, if things do not take, if souls do not prosper. Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? What! Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? So the apostle also bespeaks the Corinthians in 2 Cor. 6. 12. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. In what respect doth he mean that they were not straitened in them? He means plain enough, that what of the influence and communication of the Holy Ghost had come forth upon them, to dispose and frame them for that great work of treating and dealing with souls, it was not fully answered by those whom they did treat and deal with: "Ye are not straitened in us." He gives a very great demonstration of it, in what he speaks with such largeness and liberty of spirit, in all that goes before. He speaks like a man triumphing in that large and abundant sense, which he had of those full and flowing communications of the Holy Ghost, which had come in upon him, by which he was enabled to "do all things, to bear all things, to endure all things," to pass through whatsoever difficulties, to be "in stripes, imprisonments, watchings, fastings, with all pureness, long-suffering, kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the power of God," and so on. "O ye Corinthians," saith he, "our mouth is open unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but in your own bowels." This argues the matter we are speaking of, even a *fortiori*. The ministers of the gospel at that time were not fountains, they were but cisterns; and if they were not straitened in the very cistern, much less in the fountain. "Even in that communication which is come so near you, that cistern from whence you are to receive, there ye are not straitened. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels."

Sixthly. We find it frequently insisted upon as matter of prayer, that communications suitable to the actions of a christian, and the divine life might be given forth; but it would be most unreasonable to suppose that we should be taught to pray for an incommunicable thing. This consideration we formerly made use of to prove that such communications are necessary, and it equally serves the present purpose, to prove that they are possible. For as we are not taught to pray but for such things as are of great concernment to us, so we have very little reason to think that we should ever be taught to pray for

such things as are not grantable, or cannot be had. But we find the apostle making it matter of prayer in Eph. 3. 16. That God would grant them according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that so Christ might dwell in their hearts by faith, &c. intimating that Christ could have no commerce with their spirits, but by their active faith in him. They must entertain him, and converse with him, believing in him, and drawing influence from him that way; but this could never be done unless they were strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man to this purpose: and therefore this is a thing for which the apostle thought it fit to "bow his knees unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." And so, as we noted upon that other occasion, in praying for the Colossians that they "might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," he prays for an influence by which they might be enabled so to walk, which is the same thing as that they might walk in the Spirit. For it can be no other than that influence by which they were so to walk, "being fruitful in every good work," as you have it there expressed also: an influence suited to the actions and operations of the new creature, or of those who are made spiritually alive.

Seventhly. We may farther argue hence, that if we do not suppose the Spirit thus communicative, according as the case requires, then were the whole workmanship of the new creature in vain. For the very end of its creation is the doing of holy and spiritual actions, but they could never be done without such an influence as by which the principles of the new creature may be reduced into act. We are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Eph. 2. 10. Now it were a most unreasonable thing, and infinitely unworthy the divine wisdom, that he should create such a creature for such a purpose, and not supply it with influence that can make it serve that purpose. Then might it be said as well in reference to the new creation, as it was said to the lapsed, apostate part of the old, Are all men made in vain? Indeed they made themselves so, unsuitable to the purpose for which they were made. But that there should be an essay to renovate things, a new creation, and such a sort of creature as should now certainly attain the end for which it was made, this is a thing never to be supposed. What was each principle in the new creature made for, but for actions suitable to that principle? Why is faith put into the soul, but that the soul might be enabled to believe? Why love, but that it might act love? Why patience, but that it might exercise patience? But after that these principles are all actually implanted in the soul, without

an influence they cannot be brought forth into act, as hath been formerly shewn; there must be therefore a communication of the Spirit, it must be still ready to communicate in order to these actings, otherwise the whole frame of the new creature were to no purpose.

Eighthly. We find that christians are called upon, and pressed to increase and abound more and more in good works; (as in 1 Cor. 15. 58. Be stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord. And in 1 Thes. 4. 1. We exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more) which plainly implies that there is still a proportionable influence thereto, if it were attended to and improved.

Ninthly. Influence for such purpose hath been owned and acknowledged to have been received in a way of prayer, and therefore we are always to look upon it as communicable. In the day when I cried thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul, Ps. 138. 3. There is a recorded experience. It is but ask, and have. "I have asked, and I have had upon my asking; influence did come in. He strengthened me with strength in my soul."

Tenthly, and lastly. It is matter of express promise and of faith, and therefore it must be a certain thing that such communication is to be had. Of promise, our Saviour speaks of it most plainly in Luke 11. 13. If ye—being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? He will give his Spirit to them that ask him, as readily as you do bread to your children, and you have great reason to suppose, much more readily. And in reference to holy and spiritual actions (for these are a christian's fruit) our Saviour tells his disciples that, Let them but abide in him (which is a parallel expression to walking in the Spirit, for it is his Spirit in which they are to walk) and they shall bring forth much fruit. John 15. 5. He hath assured us that it shall be so. And it is matter of faith as it is promised; for we are plainly told, that we are to receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, in Gal. 3. 14. It therefore must be a certain thing before. For faith doth not make its object be, but the object must be pre-existent. That which I am to believe as true, must be true before I believe it; I do not make it true by believing. That is, I am not to pitch my faith upon an object, which is hitherto false; and then think to make a falsehood truth by my believing, but that which I am to believe as true, must, as hath

been said, first be true before I believe it, and the truth of the thing is the reason why I am obliged to believe it. If therefore I am to receive the promise of the Spirit, or the promised Spirit, by faith, it must certainly be true before, that it is receivable, that it is to be had, that it, and its influences can be afforded, and are ready to be communicated.

And the case being so, why do we wistly look upon one another with meagre and languishing souls, into which leanness enters, which are wasting, and consuming and pining away under their own distempers? There is an infinite fulness of Spirit, from whence we may have what is suitable to all our need: "that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God." The apostle brings in that prayer of his when he had been desiring that they might be strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, in the before-mentioned Eph. 3. That such communications are to be had as are needful to our walking in the Spirit, it was necessary thus to insist upon it, that we might understand and know to what it is to be imputed, and where all the blame and fault ought to lie, if there be languishings upon us, if we do not walk in the Spirit, if our knees are too feeble, and we cannot walk, if we are become in a spiritual sense cripples, unapt, unable for spiritual motion and action. And therefore it concerns us to bethink ourselves seriously whether there be not the tokens upon us of a spiritual decay, languor, ineptitude for the actions and functions of the spiritual and Christian life. Are there not? Can we say, that God is with us as he hath been wont to be with his people heretofore? If he be with us, why is it thus? According to that expostulation in Judges 6. 13. When, in another sense, that people were in a miserable, decaying state, is it not in a spiritual sense so with us? Do we not fade as a leaf? Are there not grey hairs here and there upon us? If the Lord be with us as formerly by the communications and influences of his Spirit, why are our hearts so low? Why is it that so little grace stirs? Why is there so little faith, so little love to him, and so little appearance and discovery of a heavenly mind? Why do the fruits of the Spirit flourish no more? It concerns us to bethink ourselves. Can we say God is with us as he hath been with his people? or as it may possibly be remembered he hath been with us? With us in our closets? With us in our families? With us at our tables? Is he with us at his own table? Is he with us in our ordinary affairs and converse? Is he with us in our solemn assemblies, as he hath sometime been among us here? Is this Spirit with us, as a Spirit of faith, a Spirit of love, and of power, and of a sound mind. Is it with us as a Spirit of humiliation in such a time

as this, to abase and humble us, and lay us low in the dust before the Lord? Is it with us, as a Spirit of grace and supplication, to enable us to strive and wrestle with heaven, to implore earnestly, and cry aloud for mercy in such a time as this? Is it with us, as a sin-mortifying Spirit, a world-crucifying Spirit; as the Spirit of meekness, and patience, and self-denial, and humility; and as the Spirit of the fear of the Lord, as a holy and a heavenly Spirit? If it be not, if our own hearts must say it is not, it is fit we should know what to say next, that is, that it lies upon us that it is not. It is not because this Spirit is not full, or is less apt to give forth its influences than formerly, but because we do not our part; we do not mind walking in the Spirit as that which doth belong to us, and to our state as our duty. Which is the next thing we have to speak to.

SERMON XVI.*

WE now go on

2. To shew, that it belongs to the state of regenerate persons, to walk in the Spirit, as a *duty*. The former, namely, that it belongs to them as a *privilege*, is implied in the precept, as you have heard; this latter is expressed in it, as you plainly see, Walk in the Spirit. It is a thing enjoined upon christians, or those who are supposed to live in the Spirit, that they walk in it. This therefore doth imply, that somewhat is incumbent upon us as matter of duty, with which a participation of the Spirit, in order to our walking in it, is connected. And it will be here requisite—to say somewhat concerning this connexion, and—to give you an account of those things wherewith such participation of the Spirit is connected.

(1.) It is requisite to premise somewhat concerning this connexion. That there is such a connexion is plain to you already, from what hath been said: the precept doth manifestly suppose it. What kind of connexion it is, I shall very briefly shew you, only in these two particulars, namely—that it is a gratuitous, and—that it is yet a sure connexion.

[1.] It is a gratuitous connexion. Not a natural one, as though it could not possibly have been but that, if such and such things should be by way of grace procured, or done for

* Preached April 3d. 1678, at Cordwainer's Hall.

any of the children of men, still a farther, and a farther communication of the Spirit must needs ensue. And we know there are many things that are so connected in their own natures that it would imply a contradiction, that one should be, and the other not. But such connexion there is not in the present case. For if we should reflect upon any of the things wherewith we may suppose such a communication of the Spirit to be most connected, it would be apparent that the connexion is most gratuitous, we can reflect upon nothing wherewith it is more eminently connected than with faith, as we shall have occasion to shew presently. But no man can suppose the connexion to be natural between an act of faith exerted and put forth in and by my soul, and a participation consequent thereupon of an influence from the eternal and almighty Spirit of God. For how is it concerned in me, if it did not concern itself? Or what claim, or challenge could there have been, if it had not brought itself under an obligation, of such a divine influence. As well might a worm that crawls upon the earth, command the motions of the sun, or occasion it so and so to communicate its influence and its light. When we say it is a gratuitous connexion, it imports these two things:

First. That it is a connexion made with absolute, sovereign liberty: that such a connexion might have been, or might not have been antecedently to its being settled and made.

Secondly, It imports not only liberty, but complacency in the vouchsafement: that whatsoever is done in such a way is done with delight, that he that doth it, takes pleasure in the doing of it. Indeed both these are manifestly imported in that expression in Phil. 2. 13. It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Of his good pleasure, that is, so as that he might have forborne so to work, if it had pleased him; and while he doth so work in us, it doth most highly please him so to work, or to vouchsafe that co-operative influence. He doth it with delight; as it were, enjoining his own act, and gratifying himself in the benignity of his own nature, from whence it doth proceed that he works with such creatures as these.

In both these ways we must understand it to be gratuitous, that there is any such connexion between any thing of our duty, and such a participation of the Spirit. It is gratuitous the former way antecedently to any such connexion made and settled, as hath been shewn. It is gratuitous in the latter sense continuedly all along, while this connexion doth hold, as it will perpetually hold. For though it be true indeed, that after this connexion is once made and settled, he, who had made and settled it, hath brought himself under an obligation, so as

that he will not rescind it, as we shall presently shew you, and therefore it is not now continued upon such terms, as that it may, or may not be; yet it is gratuitous still in the latter sense, that is, as being continued with complacency, he never repenting that he hath made such a connexion, but remaining in the same mind still, and always; that we doing so and so, or there being such dispositions and frames of spirit inwrought in us, they shall be earnests and pledges to us of still farther communications of his Spirit, according to the tenour of his own law and rule, *habenti dabitur*, "to him that hath shall be given." So it is a gratuitous connexion.

[2.] It is a sure connexion. Most stable and firm, such as whereof we need not fear an alteration. This may seem not so well to agree with the former; if it be so free and gratuitous, then some may think that it should not be so sure. But the apostle hath taught us to argue otherwise in this case, and to understand the matter quite after another tenour, in that passage of his, in Rom. 4. 16. Therefore it is of faith, that it might be of grace, to the end that the promise might be sure to all the seed. That is, the evangelical promise in general, whereof this, of the communication of the Spirit is one great part, yea, itself sometimes goes, in the language of the New Testament under the name of—the promise. Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost for the promise is to you and your children, in Acts. 2. 38, 39. It is therefore free, that it might be sure. This, I confess, according to the manner of men, would not be thought good logic. Things in reference whereto men act freely, or are left to their liberty, one would think were very unsure. But it is not so with the blessed God in this case. We are so much the more ascertained by how much the more the root and foundation of this connexion is in grace. For we must consider how grace hath laid out its own method, and made way for the pursuing and bringing about its own great design. Consider it in reference to this very case, the communication of the Spirit; it was obtained by a Mediator; it was so designed and determined, that no influence of the Spirit should go forth in order to saving purposes unto the lost and apostate children of men, but in and through a Mediator. Therefore it is told us again and again in Scripture that it is he that sends it, or if the Father be said to send it, that he would send it in his name. Both these forms of expression you have in the 14th and 15th chapters of John's gospel, and to the same purpose, somewhat in the 16th. And he was made a curse for us, for this purpose, that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, in Gal. 3. 14.

And hereupon, upon the susception and undertaking of the Mediator, a covenant is established and settled on sure promises, a system of sure promises comprized and formed up together, in which, as was said before, this is the main thing, that the Spirit should be given forth. Now the whole undertaking of the Mediator must otherwise fail and come to nothing, and all these promises, which are yea, and amen in him, 2 Cor. 1. 20. So that hence it cannot but be that, though, as you have heard, this is a connexion most arbitrarily made, yet it is a most sure and certain connexion notwithstanding; inasmuch as the Spirit, wheresoever it is given forth, is given forth through a Mediator and upon the promise. And so we must understand the tenour of this connexion, as that upon such duty the participation of the Spirit will still ensue, in farther and farther degrees; and where there is no such thing as is incumbent upon us in a way of duty, there we cannot promise it to ourselves in any certain stated course, though according to its absolute liberty, it can go forth and let out its influence when, and where it pleases.

(2.) We are now to consider the things themselves that are charged upon us as matter of duty, wherewith the participation of the Spirit is connected. And they are such as these:

[1.] A sense of our indigent state in this respect: that we stand in the greatest need of this blessed Spirit and its vital influences, for all the purposes of the Christian life: that we can do nothing, nothing as we should, not turn a hand, or move a foot without it. It was most reasonable, that the gradual communications of this Spirit should be in connexion with such a disposition and temper of soul in us. For do we think it were honourable that the Spirit should be under an obligation there to be and work, where there is no apprehension at all of any work done, but what might as well be done by a common hand; and that it should do the work, and we have the honour of it, that there should be a disposition in us to arrogate it to ourselves, if there be any holy, gracious operation in us, which hath a tendency to our future happy being. Nothing is more apparent than that there was a high congruity in it, that the Spirit should still go forth in its gradual communications and exertions of its influence, so as that there be a sense still preserved in the subject to be gradually wrought upon, that without it we can do nothing. We may easily see how the matter stands in this respect, if we do but consider where there have been most manifest languishings and decays, feebleness and weakness, as to all the actions and operations of the spiritual life. As to instance in the church of Laodicea, it is plain they were got into a posture very unsuitable unto

walking in the Spirit, and see what their sense was of themselves, and of their own state all this while: Thou sayest I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. Rev. 3. 17. If they are blind and maimed creatures, whom this Spirit is to have the conduct of, it doth justly insist upon this, that they reflect, and understand themselves to be blind and maimed, that they cannot go without being led, without being supported and borne up in their way all along. And while there is little of this sense among us of our great need of the continual influence of the blessed Spirit in order to the conducting the whole course of our walking, it is not much to be wondered at, if this Spirit do suspend and restrain its influences, and be at a very great distance from us. And I am afraid there is very little of this sense among us at this day, that it is too generally thought, that we can do well enough without the Spirit. There is not that notion and apprehension, yet there seems to be that practical judgment, "we do not need the Spirit;" and when we are left destitute of it in a great measure, we do not feel a need of it, and there is little complaint that the Spirit is retired, and not given forth as some have found it in former days. Grey hairs are here and there upon us, yet we know it not (to apply those words to this purpose, which might mean another thing in) Hos. 7. 9. It is with a great many christians as it is said to have been with Samson in Judges 16. 20. He wist not that the Lord was departed from him. God was gone, and his great strength was gone, and he knew it not, but thought to have found it with him as at other times. When we walk on from day to day in a course of ordinary duty, and it may be get nothing by it, no life, no strength, no influence of the Spirit, how little sense is there all this while of its absence from us! How few, that regret the matter! One would think there should be strange palpitations and throbbings of heart among us, to think how little there is of the Spirit of the living God breathing in his own ordinances, and through the most sacred, weighty and important truths that we hear from time to time. Methinks our hearts should misgive us, and we should be often recounting with ourselves, What will this come to? A religion not animated by the Spirit, in which there is no life, no influence, what will it come to?

[2.] A deep apprehension, or an inward, cordial owning of the arbitrariness of the Spirit and its communications, and of our own great unworthiness thereof. This is another thing wherewith we are to account the stated communications of the

Spirit are connected, That is, that there be not only a sense of our want and indigency, but of our very great unworthiness that ever that pure and Holy Spirit should touch with our souls, or have to do with us. This way is its virtue engaged and drawn forth. How was the virtue of Christ drawn forth in order to the doing of cures which he wrought by the Spirit of God? It is a remarkable instance to our present purpose which we have in Mat. 8. 8. "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof;" then goes forth his influence, and does the thing that was desired to be done. To have only this notion in our minds, alas! that signifies little, but to have an intimate, habitual sense inwrought in our hearts, and maintained there, "how most utterly unworthy we, especially, and indeed all men are, that ever there should have been a descent of the blessed Spirit of the living God; that ever it should have let down any thing of its light and influence into this dismal and impure world." Were we more worthy that the Spirit of God should work among us, than among pagans? Where there is an admiring sense of the arbitrariness of grace in this case, and our own great unworthiness, there the Spirit is most apt to issue forth in vital influence according to the necessities of our state. This is true humility and poverty of Spirit, to which that kingdom belongs, which, in the very *primordia* of it, is made up of righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, Mat. 5 3. compared with Rom. 14. 17. It is to the humble soul that still more grace is given, but he resisteth the proud, (James 4. 6.) those who are so insolent as to think no divine gift too good for them. But to the humble soul that lies in the dust self-abased, and always in an apt posture to admire grace, if it may but have any, the least, breath of that influence from the blessed Spirit of God; it may be expected still freely to be given forth. The high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity—and dwelleth in the high and holy place looks to that man, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at his word, Isa. lxvi. 2. and lvii. 15. And if you look back to the 14th ver. of that chapter, you find the expressions more apposite to our present purpose, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling block out of the way of my people? "I would have my people have a fine, easy, pleasant, comfortable walk," (such as is their walk, who walk in the Spirit) and then it is immediately added, "Thus saith the high and lofty One, that inhabiteth, eternity, whose name is holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones;" so as that they shall be always in a posture for walking

in that way thus cast up, prepared, and made level for them.

[3.] A high valuation of spiritual influence. When we put the greatest price upon spiritual good things, then we are in a disposition to receive them from this blessed Spirit. We find that they who have had most of it, upon whom it hath been continually coming in afresh, have been full of the expressions of their high value of spiritual communications. And even where such things as are considerable, under the notion of means have been so highly valued, it appears rationally to be collected, that the end of those means was more highly valued, and by the expressions, by which hath been signified the value of the means, the value of the end hath been more signified; as when we find so high an esteem expressed of the law of the word of God, by the people of God in Scripture records. Why, how do you understand it, when it is said, The law of thy mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver, in Ps. 119. 72. (and other passages of like import you have in that psalm, and elsewhere) what? would we understand it otherwise than of the animated word, or law? Was it a dead letter, considered as such, without any reference to the Spirit and its influence working through it and by it, upon which all that price was put? What would that have signified to have had a spiritless law, a law, without any such Spirit going with it as should make it a law of life? The law of the Spirit of life you find it called, that is, according to the impression that it hath upon the heart and soul. in Rom. 8. 2. It was, as such; that the law of God was so highly prized by his people, as it was the medium through which the Spirit was conveyed and given in from time to time. And we may measure our expectations of the Spirit to be communicated and given to us, very much by this thing. What is our estimation of such vouchsafements? If we were indeed to speak the sense of our souls, we might soon find what our value is of external and earthly good things. We know what value we should have for a plentiful estate, and for a peaceful, easy life, so as to have our flesh in all things accommodated, and our sense gratified. Do we find that there is a proportionable estimate of spiritual good things, and that is, that, according as their value is superior, we proportionably esteem them? Is it the sense of our souls, "Lord, whatever thou dost with me, let me have much of thy Spirit. Though I be poor, though I be miserable, though I be pinched with straits and wants all my days, though I be exposed to wanderings, let me have thy Spirit; take away any thing from me, withhold any thing rather than thy Spirit." And hereupon

[4.] Earnest desire of spiritual influence. With that the

participation, the farther participation of it is most surely connected. Vehement longings, where there is some of it, are an earnest of still more. When the heart is panting after God, the living God, as the hunted hart after the water brooks, it is a good pledge, a pre-assuring token, that there shall be still more and more. How express are those words of our Saviour, Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled, Mat. 5. 6. To hunger and thirst after righteousness, is to hunger and thirst after spiritual influence; which implies, that without that, all the fruits of righteousness languish, or could never have been. It is indeed a wonderful thing seriously to contemplate, that there should be a connexion between such desires, and such participations thereupon; that ever the great God should have vouchsafed and condescended thus, as to make it become a stated thing, that they who do desire, shall partake, even of that sacred, heavenly influence. We do not find it to be so, as to meaner things, and of a lower nature. We find not any such connexion between the desire of riches, and riches; between the desire of honour, and honour. There is no scripture that saith, If you desire to be rich, you shall be rich; if you desire to be honourable and great in this world, you shall be great and honourable; and if you desire to live a peaceful, quiet life, you shall live such a life in this world. But we find it said, "Desire, and hunger and thirst after righteousness, and you shall be filled." There is no such connexion of an appetite to natural food, and food; a hungry beggar cannot be sure, that because he is hungry, therefore he shall be satisfied, that his hunger will entitle him to a meal's meat: but here you find the case is so; and how admirable is the grace that hath made it so! Desire spiritual influence, and you shall have it; spiritual communications, and your receivings shall be according to your hearts. For bring a sincere desire directed to God, and terminated upon him, and our Saviour hath assured us, that if we ask, we shall receive; if we seek, we shall find; if we knock, it shall be opened to us, and even in this very kind: look into the context of that scripture, Luke 11. 12, 13. All comes at last to this result, How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him? It is elsewhere said, good things, and here it is said, the Holy Spirit. According as grace hath laid out to itself its own methods, desire is a drawing thing; it draws in vital influence from the blessed Spirit, even as we attract and draw in breath, in the ordinary course of our breathing. And it must ordinarily be said, that they only are destitute of spiritual influence, who desire it not; and when that may be said, sure there is enough

to be said to justify the retraction or suspension of any such influence.

[5.] Dependance upon it, is another thing wherewith a participation of the Spirit is most surely connected. I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me, Gal. 2. 20. They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, and mount up with wings, as eagles, Isa. xl. 31. How did the poor cripple (that we read of in Acts 3.) derive influence by which he was enabled to walk? Why, he looked upon Peter and John, expecting to receive something from them. He drew even with his eye, a craving eye, an expecting eye. "Sure there is something to be gotten of these men." They bade him look upon them, he looked accordingly. And we are bidden to look too: "Look unto me—all the ends of the earth." Isa. 45. 22. We are directed to look upward, to look with an expecting eye: influence will come. As the eyes of all other creatures are put up unto God, and he is not wanting unto the work of his hands, so the new creature is prompted to do so much more, to look up intelligently, and with design: "With design I do it, that I may receive: and he who feeds ravens, and takes care of sparrows, will not famish souls, that look up with an expecting and begging eye, as those that not only know their own need, but believe his bounty." And indeed if there be not this in it, it is most highly to affront him, and then no wonder, if the stream of his bounty be turned another way, and never reach us.

There are other particulars, which I should have spoken to, but I find the time prevents me. The design of all this will much drive this way, (which, I shall so far prevent myself, as to take notice of to you now) to let us see, that if we find not the Spirit communicated to us, so far as is necessary to our walking in the Spirit, it is through our own default, we owe it to ourselves. Pray, do but consider; Is it not our fault, if we are insensible of any need of the Spirit? Or, of our unworthiness of it? Is it not a fault, if we value not the immediate communications of the blessed God from his own Holy Spirit? Is it no fault, to prefer dirt and vanity before the influences of that Spirit, the maintenance of present spiritual life, and the pledge and earnest of an eternal state of life? Is it no fault, if we desire not that there should be a commerce between us and that Spirit? if we think it not a thing worthy to be desired, worthy to be sought after? If we could have the privilege of daily communication with an angel; if we might have him to talk and converse with, to guide and instruct us from day to day in all our ways and affairs, and to comfort

and relieve us in all our troubles and sorrows, would we account meanly of this? or, think it a thing fit to be made light of? But what comparison is there between the commerce of an angel, and such a commerce with the blessed Spirit of God? A being taken into that communion, which is called the communion of the Holy Ghost, in 2 Cor. 13. 14. Is it not our fault, if we want the influences of the Spirit, and it hath no intercourse with us, merely through our neglect, and because we care not for it? Is it no fault, if we will not trust him who hath promised, and whose word is more stable than the foundations of heaven and earth? He hath promised, and we will not believe him! Conscience, if it do its part, will fasten the charge of guilt upon ourselves; that if there be a retraction or suspension of spiritual communications from us, it is through our own fault: we walk solitarily; we do not walk in the Spirit, but we walk alone, and as outcasts from God, as those whom he hath nothing to do with, and who have nothing to do with him, but all through our own default. It is meet that we should admit the conviction of conscience concerning this thing, that we may not indulge ourselves, in so manifest, and so dangerous a delinquency.

SERMON XVII.*

WE go on to mention some more of the particular duties, wherewith such a communication of the Spirit stands connected, as is requisite to our walking in the Spirit; beside the five already spoken to.

[6.] That we obey its dictates; resign and yield ourselves to its governing power. This is plainly enough signified in the expressions of being "led by the Spirit," and "walking after the Spirit," which we have divers times in Rom. 8. and elsewhere. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, that walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." This imports a ductile, sequacious, guidable frame and temper, an aptness to yield and comply with all the suggestions of that blessed Spirit. Yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, Rom. 6. 13. How manifestly distinguishable is the case, between going about to raise a living person that is fallen, and to raise a dead carcass! A living person yields himself to our helping hand: "So, yield yourselves to God, as those that are alive:"—The word that is there used, is the same with that which we have in Rom. 12. 1. Present yourselves to God a living sacrifice: and it signifies to offer one's self readily for this or that, to be in a ready posture to do what we are prompted to and put upon. And this walking after the Spirit is frequently inculcated in that forementioned chapter, Rom. 8. 1, 4, 13. And then you have the expres-

* Preached April 17th, 1678. at Cordwainer's Hall.

sion of being led by the Spirit, following the other, ver. 14. And again in this chapter where the text lies, Gal. 5. 18. If ye be led by the Spirit. This word signifies to be acted by it: which doth also suppose a compliance on our part, and that we concur; that we be in a prepared posture to act as we shall be from time to time acted. To rebel against the Spirit, vexatiously to contend, to oppose ourselves unto its dictates, we may easily understand cannot be the way to entitle ourselves to its communications. It is promised to be—a guide to lead into all truth,—all that truth which is after godliness: we must understand it chiefly of such truth, as doth concern Christian practice: but if we fall out and quarrel with our guide, and will not obey; what can we expect, but that it should in just displeasure retire, and leave us to walk alone, or to wander as our own inclination shall lead us?

[7.] That we strictly observe and closely adhere unto our rule. This is requisite in order to our having these needful communications of the Spirit: for it dictates according to that external rule: we ought therefore to have our eye upon that, which all along lines the way in which we are to walk. We shall very unreasonably and vainly expect to have the Spirit still constantly following us in all our extravagancies and excursions: if it arbitrarily do so, as the Spirit many times doth; yet we have not reason to expect it should do so in a stated course. The way of the Lord is strength to the upright, Prov. 10. 29. In their very way they meet with their strength: holding on their course in that way, they find themselves still to go from strength to strength, (ps. 84. 7.) to grow stronger and stronger, Job 17. 9. When our way is pleasing to God, then we may expect that by his Spirit he should converse with us in our way; that is, if his way like us. Two cannot walk together, except they be agreed; and especially if they be not agreed upon their way. Now we find, that the way wherein we are to walk so as to please God, is prescribed and directed all along by his word. Ye have received of us, saith the apostle, how ye ought to walk and to please God, 1 Thes. 4. 1. He hath directed the way by express precept; in which if we walk and so please him, he will converse with us by his Spirit; then we shall have his continual assisting, directing presence. The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way. Then though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. Ps. 37. 23, 24. Enoch gained a testimony of God, that he so walked as to please God. Heb. 11. 5. To be sure he had him for the guide and companion of his way. It is not much that we are under the same lot, that our Lord Christ

was contented to be under. John 8. 29. He that sent me, is with me; the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. And he doth require it of us, that as he did keep his Father's commandments, and abide in his love; so we should keep his commandments, and abide in his love, (John 15. 10.) and so have his spiritual presence, or his Spirit to be present with us, by which he saith he would be present with his, when as to his outward man he must be removed and gone out of this state. That passage in ps. 101. 2. is very observable: the Psalmist resolves upon this, that he would behave himself wisely in a perfect way, and that he would walk with a perfect heart; would take care of his way that it was a strait and perfect path in which he should walk: and doing this, you find him in such a posture expecting, "O when wilt thou come unto me?" Walking, as we told you before, connoted a way; and this must be a way suitable to the Spirit, if we reckon upon walking in the Spirit. To walk in the way of our own hearts, and think that the Spirit should be with us there, is certainly a very foolish expectation.

[8.] That we design all the strength and vigour, that we shall receive from the Spirit, in order to our walking unto the divine honour and glory and service, as the end of it. Walking doth connote an end, as well as a way. And to walk in the Spirit must suppose, that there be an end suitable to the Spirit: and what is most immediately from God, ought to be most directly and entirely designed for him. And I doubt not but there is a very common fault among christians as to this thing; they desire spiritual communications for themselves, because it is a very delightful and pleasurable thing to be carried as upon eagles' wings, to have so sensible help in all one's walking: therefore they desire such helps and influences as a privilege; and sometimes lament the retraction and withdrawment of it merely as an infelicity, without charging themselves with sin in the case: and it is in the mean time forgotten, that what God gives upon this account is for himself, and we ought to have the same design with him. The apostle speaks of his way of living, Gal. 2. 20. I live, saith he, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. Immediately before you have the end of that life, as here you have the spring and source of it: I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God, ver. 19. Christ feeds and maintains that life, and supplies all the motive and active power belonging to it, which shall be devoted to himself, and terminate wholly upon himself. We are to look upon all these communications

as trusts, which are to be employed according to the pleasure and for the service of him that doth intrust us. Who will commit to your trust, says Christ, the true riches, if ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon? Luke 16. 11. The things of this life are comprehended under the "mammon of unrighteousness:" to these are opposed "the true riches," which must mean spiritual good things; such riches as those spoken of in Eph. 3. 16. where the apostle is praying for the Ephesians, that God would grant them according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might, by the Spirit in the inner man. Who will trust you with such riches? It implies, that such riches, wherever they are given, are given but as a trust, and therefore are to be employed for him that intrusts us with them. They are talents, that must be improved for him: for that passage doth refer unto the parable concerning the talents, as you may see in the beginning of Luke 16. There is a great hold, as I may say, that the soul hath upon the Spirit and his communications by such an ingenuity as this is; as we many times by ingenuities engage and oblige one another. When this shall be the posture of the soul and its sense towards God; "I only desire such strength and such assistances from thee, to use them for thee, for thy own work:" when we are ready to put such a dedication, such an inscription upon every act that we design to do by such a received power, "To thee, O Lord; Holiness to the Lord; I only desire thy influences, that I may do thy work, and be, to the best purpose serviceable to thy name and interest in my sphere and station:" with such a disposition as this we may expect the communication of the Spirit to be most certainly connected.

Thus you see proved, how it doth belong unto the state of living christians, as a duty proper thereto, to walk in the Spirit; or what there is of duty, with which the communications of the Spirit towards our walking in it are connected.

Now by way of *use*, we have several things to infer from all this.

I. Inference. Then if we do not walk in the Spirit, it must needs be our own fault, that we embrace not the privilege that is offered, and do not the duties required. It is fit we should own it as our own fault, and charge it where it ought to lie.

But it may perhaps here be objected; That all these things that have been mentioned, as so many parts of duty in order to our obtaining the needful communications of the Spirit, are themselves the Spirit's operations: and how can they then

be prerequisites unto our obtaining such communications of the Spirit? To this we say,

1. That they are requisite unto farther communications, such as we shall still have farther use for and need of in the continued course of our walking. And it is most highly congruous unto the royalty of the divine bounty, to reward what is done by his own vouchsafement. It is his own rule and measure, that to them which have it shall be given, Luke 8. 18. They that have, shall have more. He gives more grace upon humility. James 4. 6. He giveth more grace; wherefore he saith, he resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Had he given no grace to such before; how became they humble? His grace made them so: but then he gives still more grace.

2. These are so the operations of the Spirit, as that they are our acts too. It is not the Spirit that believes and obeys, but it helps us to do so; as we shall have farther occasion to speak hereafter.

3. In such actings of renewed souls, as are in themselves holy and gracious, there are certain previous actings, that lead to them and which may and usually do end in them. As there is nothing more obvious unto the ordinary experience of christians, than that they many times begin a duty, as to pray or read, to hear or meditate, with very indisposed acts; but the Spirit comes in amidst their work: oftentimes they have no such discernible assistance at first, when they begin to act. Therefore there is somewhat previous unto that which is strictly to be considered as a holy and spiritual act.

4. There is also a preventing influence or grace of the Spirit, unto which it is safe to attribute even those precious tendencies to such acts, to holy and gracious acts. But then we must also know, that this is not always efficacious, so as to end in holy and gracious actions: because the Spirit doth, sometimes from sovereignty, but more ordinarily from paternal justice, retire and withdraw itself, when those first overtures are not complied with. As is manifest from its being intimated to retire and withdraw upon being grieved, being resisted, being vexed; as we must suppose it to be, when it is not duly complied with in the applications it makes to the spirits even of renewed persons themselves; for they, such as "live in the Spirit," are the subject of our present discourse.

And in speaking to you of these previous tendencies unto good and holy actions, (which, it is fit we should attribute unto the Spirit of God, when we find any thing of them; though it doth not work in that over-powering way, as where it puts forth its efficacious influence in order to some holy and spiritual act

to be done;) I shall speak by way of inquiry and demand; that I may the more engage conscience, and set it on work to judge in the case between God and us; whether, if we be destitute of such assistances of the Spirit, as the exigency of our case calls for, it is not to be imputed to our manifest neglect of somewhat that we might have done? Not, that we might have done of ourselves neither; for we cannot of ourselves so much as move a finger, or stir a foot; but that by a preventing influence, in which the Spirit was beforehand with us, we could have done? Whether, if we had tried, we should not have found we might have done such and such things, that would have been in a fair tendency unto those operations or actions that are in themselves strictly and formally holy and gracious? Let us therefore commune a little with our own consciences, upon such heads as these.

(1.) Have we not omitted to reflect and take notice of the way of our own walking, so as to bring the matter to a disquisition? Can I be said in my ordinary course to walk in the Spirit? You know, reflection is a thing common to a christian with another man. It is the privilege of the reasonable spirit of man, that it can reflect upon itself: it is a rational sun, that can invert its beams, and turn them inwards. The bodily eye cannot do so, it cannot see itself: but our mind can see itself, and turn in its beams to look in upon itself. If we did apply ourselves to do so, might we not discern whether our way be transacted so, as that they can say, "This is walking in the Spirit, this looks like the Spirit?" We might surely discern, whether our works can be said to be wrought in God; an expression we have formerly taken notice of. But do not we neglect even to do this? to survey our own way, and to consider with our ownselves, "Is my course like walking in the Spirit?" It will be of no small service to put the question to ourselves often, Is it so, yea or no? am I to approve and like my way, or to disapprove it?

(2.) Might we not be often comparing our walking with that of others? As is usual with them that walk together, to measure with one another. They that are behind, take notice of such and such that are far before them, and thereupon mend their pace, and make after with more expedition. There is no one that mends his course of walking, but it is upon an apprehension of something that needs to be mended: and therefore that reflection is needful, that was spoken of before; either the pace was not quick enough, or not regular enough, or not continued enough. Besides that such faults in our walking are to be discerned by comparing with the rule, referring to the perfect law of liberty; so much might be discovered and

discerned, by comparing our walk with the more spiritual sort of christians. Sure we might do that, if we would. Might we not sometimes set such and such persons in our own thoughts before us, and think with ourselves, What a spiritual life does such a man live! How strict and even is his conversation! How manifest is it, that such a man walks with God, and lives much in heaven! Might we not do so, and accordingly mend our course in walking? For God hath set up such eminent christians to be examples and patterns to others; and we are directed "so to walk, as we have such more eminent saints for our example; to be followers of them, as they are of Christ." We ought to do so. When we compare ourselves only with ourselves, we are likely to get no instruction by it, and to be never the wiser for that. "Those that compare themselves with themselves, doing so only, are not wise;" they never learn any thing. But comparing ourselves with others, then we may receive profit and instruction; and they may be in the very view of their walking, a seasonable reproof of the carelessness and remissness and extravagency of ours. And what would it be to consider with ourselves sometimes, what even and happy lives do such and such live in comparison of mine! I am weak, and they are strong; I am dull and dead and languid, and they are quick and lively! This would be somewhat in an apt tendency towards such works and actions, as wherein our spiritual walk doth more directly consist.

(3.) Do we not neglect to consider of the sadness of our case? If we are deserted of the Spirit; we might discern, that it is not so with us as it is with others. Might we not hereupon sit down and think, "How sad a thing it is to be forsaken of that blessed Spirit, or even not to have it discernibly present, to have that Spirit, that doth so freely and graciously converse with some, refuse to converse with me; and so to be out gone by other christians, and left languishing alone!" I might think, that this is not a state to be content and well satisfied in.

(4.) Do we not neglect to—contemplate the fulness and plenitude of the blessed Spirit?—that when we find that we are poor and indigent, there are supplies to be had? Do we not neglect to take actual knowledge of this? This is a tendency to that faith in the Spirit, which is to be acted in order to our drawing forth its communications: for sure I must have the object of my faith in view, before I can perform an act of faith towards it; I cannot act faith upon that, which I do not think of. And by how much the more I do consider the plentitude and liberality and graciousness of this blessed Spirit, so much the more I see in the object to invite and draw forth

an act of faith; and I am to expect the Spirit to concur in this way in order to a kind of vital contract that I come to have with it, by which I actually partake of and draw forth influence from it. I must look to him, in whom my help is. They looked unto him, and were lightened. Ps. 34. 5. A general expression of the gracious influence of God by his Spirit; they looked to him, and quick and lively vital influence was given in.

(5.) Do we not neglect the business of self-excitation? Surely we are not to make nothing of this matter of stirring up ourselves: as there is no walking, but there are some essays previous thereto; some efforts, before a man can be said actually to have walked; a *conatus* or applying of himself thereto. Unto such a *conatus* is the expression accommodate, of girding up our loins in order to our spiritual walk. 1 Pet. 1. 13. Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end, &c. If men design a walk, they do *accingere se*, they put themselves into a ready posture for it. So we might be doing in order to our receiving the Spirit's farther influence: though as was said, we do not do this of ourselves, as we can do nothing without help; yet we should find that this is a help always afforded us, and wherein God is still beforehand with us, and which, if his helping hand were accepted in these things, might lead us farther unto those wherein our walking in the Spirit doth more formally consist. And the many passages, that we meet with in Scripture of this thing, certainly cannot be without their signification, are not set for ciphers in the Bible. As, when the apostle bids Timothy to stir up the gift that was in him, 2 Tim. 1. 6. αναζωπυρειν, that emphatical word. And we are not to think, that what he saith hath reference only to an extraordinary gift conferred upon him; as the very next words that follow shew, ver. 7. For God hath not given us the Spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind: that is, the Spirit in such operations wherein he is common to christians; though very likely there was a fuller measure of that, which did attend that ordinance of the imposition of hands, whereof the former verse speaks; according as a greater measure was required unto the greater work of an evangelist, above that of an ordinary christian, even a greater measure of special grace, or sanctifying influence. This the apostle would have Timothy to *blow up into a coal*, as the word signifies, to make the fire to live again. You also find it complained of as an accusation in Isa. lxiv. 7. that no man stirred up himself to take hold of the Lord. There is such a striving with ourselves in order to such and such spiritual works and

actions to be done. The word in the last mentioned place is very emphatical, it signifies to *awake,* and is put unto that mood which in the Hebrew language signifies action upon one's self; there is no one that goes about to awake, to rouse himself, in order to the taking hold of God. Somewhat might be done, and is to be done to this purpose. Awake, my glory, says the Psalmist, ps. 57. 8. It is most probable, that by his glory he means his soul: "Awake, O my soul, do not lie drowsing always, thou hast great work to do." That expression, in Col. 3. 16. which we read, admonishing one another, is ἑαυτοὺς, and most properly signifies *admonishing ourselves.* "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,—admonishing your ownselves, speaking to your ownselves, in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. He does not say, "We have nothing to do, nothing that lies upon us." Can we never commune with ourselves, and labour to awaken ourselves? We might expostulate with ourselves, as the Psalmist in psalm xlii. 5. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? As in reference to want of comfort, so in reference to indisposition to duty we have much more cause to chide ourselves; "Why dost thou lie dead and asleep, when thou hast so great work to do? Arise, and walk in the light of the Lord." We might charge ourselves, urge our own souls with the obligation of the divine law which we are under; as the psalmist does here, "Hope thou in God for I shall yet praise him." We might encourage ourselves, as David in that great distress at Ziklag is said to have encouraged himself in the Lord his God. 1 Sam. 30. 6. And we might resolve with ourselves upon this or that thing to be done. I will love thee, O Lord my strength, Ps. 18. 1. There was a resolution of going upon such an exercise of love and praise, before he actually engaged in the work itself: now I will go and apply myself to a love-commerce with God, to enlarge and expatiate in his love and praises. We might say, "We will now apply ourselves to the business, before such and such a work be actually done." Are we not omissive and neglectful in such things?

(6.) Might we not be more frequent, or more diligent, serious and attentive, in our waiting upon the solemn ordinances of God? Many of us might come oftener, or come sooner, or more compose ourselves to attention when we come unto those means, through which the Spirit of God is wont to work, and by which it conveys its influence.

(7.) Might we not be much oftener in our closets, and retire more frequently? Here lies the too little observed cause of the languishing of religion among us at this day; persons

let the business of this world so shuffle out their religion, that they cannot have any time to go and be apart with God; and they are left so much alone, because they are so little alone: as was the saying of a heathen, "I am never less alone, than when I am alone." Many a time might we have a good meeting with God in a corner, if we should allow ourselves to be a little there.

(8.) Might we not be more conversant at such chosen times with the word of God, than we are? It is through that, this Spirit breathes. Thy word hath quickened me Ps. 119. 50. With thy precepts thou hast quickened me, ver. 93. Through that word which was of his own inspiring, γραφη θεοπνευστος, *the Spirit chooses still to breathe.* And is it not sad to think, that among many professors, the Bible should lie by as an unprofitable neglected history about the house, as part of the lumber which we know not how to make use of? The word is the Spirit's sword; and the corruptions of our hearts, that are the great hindrances of our walking, need hewing many times; but we put not ourselves under the stroke of the sword by which this should be done. And truly, if any of us should live to see the time or know the place, where it might be a crime to have a Bible in our houses; we should then have cause to reflect, that we have made so little use of it when we had it.

(9.) Might we not be more in prayer upon this subject, that is, for the Spirit? Might we not insist more upon it, and plead more earnestly for spiritual communications? We are told, that "God will give his Spirit unto them that ask him;" unto his children, as readily as we will give bread to ours, rather than a stone. And will not we believe it? Or if we do, is it a thing so little worth our looking after, to have our souls inhabited and animated by that blessed Spirit, to have it reside and rule in us? Is this so little to be regarded by us? I believe there will a time come with many professors, that are now very much asleep, when they shall value a communication of the Spirit more than any one enjoyment whatsoever, however they are now absorbed and drunk up of the spirit of this world. If God rend and take away all from us, and we have nothing else left, nothing to trust to, but what we have from above; then those things from above will be things of value. And what would we desire more, than to be so plainly told as we are, that we shall have for seeking? Your heart shall live, that do seek God. Ps. 69. 32. Would you have plainer words? They shall praise the Lord, that seek him; your heart (their heart) shall live for ever, Ps. 22. 26.

(10.) Might we not more abstain from the things that we

know tend to grieve the Spirit? Many such things there are. It cannot but occur to our own knowledge and thoughts, if at any time they be serious, that such and such things (our own hearts will tell us what they are,) must needs be a grief to the Spirit of God; and if I allow myself to tread such and such paths, the Spirit and I shall grow strangers unto one another. The indulging of sensual desires, allowing a liberty unto enormous and exorbitant passions, letting out our spirits to the minding of earthly things without check and restraint, falling into jangles and contentions with others, cherishing our own enmity and discontents toward such and such persons, or upon such and such occasions. How do we think, that that pure and holy and blessed Spirit will inhabit so impure and licentious and unpeaceable breasts as ours are? The letting out our thoughts and affections to vanity, so as only to be in a disposition to mind trifles and converse with them, cannot but produce a great strangeness. Do not you know, that there is many a serious man who would forsake your company, if he saw that you were in no disposition to mind any thing that was serious; and that to talk of nothing but toys and trifles was pleasing and grateful to you? Serious men would leave you upon this, and think you unsuitable company for them.

SERMON XVIII.*

II Inference. In the great business of the Christian life, it is not the Spirit that doth all, but there is a part incumbent upon us. This is manifest, when it is said to belong to us, if we are christians indeed, to "walk in the Spirit." Then the business of the Christian life is not to be done by the Spirit alone, but we have a part to do therein. And it is not unnecessary to insist a little upon this. I do not reckon this necessary, merely for the confutation of their error, who think otherwise; for I cannot think there are any among us that are of a contrary opinion; though some such there have been, and probably, enough are in the world, who have thought it to be a great piece of perfection to be aspired unto by christians, to be merely passive in the business of religion; and that by how much the more perfect they are, so much the more passive, and do so much the less in religion: but I suspect not any here to be of that mind. It is upon a more practical account, that this is fit to be insisted on: for though we have no such formed apprehensions, yet it is too plain that most carry the matter as if they had nothing to do. And therefore I shall urge some considerations to evince what I suppose to be already our common belief, that there is a part incumbent upon us;

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to enliven a little that belief in our souls, and that we may be stirred up to walk and act more agreeably to it.

1. The very notion of walking in the text, doth most strongly exclaim against the supposition of our having nothing to do. You have been formerly told, that if a man should roll a stone, or drag a log, neither of them would be said to walk. Walking is a voluntary, spontaneous motion, from an internal, and some way or other self-directing principle; when we design the motion and choose the way wherein we are to walk, being enabled to choose aright. And by how much the more the Spirit puts forth its influence in order to our walking, so much the more are we at liberty; with so much the more spontaneity and activity and vigour do we go on in that course unto which it prompts. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty, 2 Cor. 3. 17. And I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart, Ps. 119. 32.

2. It is to be argued by an induction of such particulars, as we have formerly instanced in, that we have a part incumbent upon us. Concerning which of them would we say, that they are not our part? That which begins our course, repentance towards God, is not that our work? That, by which we derive strength and vigour for that course of holy motion, that faith which is continually to supply us from the fountain with influence, is not this incumbent upon us? Is it not our part to resign and yield ourselves, and to obey the influences and dictates of the blessed Spirit of God? Can we then yet say or think, that we have nothing to do, or carry as if we had not?

But it may be said, that these are the works of the Holy Ghost, to repent, to believe, to resign, to obey, and the like.

It is very true indeed. But what hinders, that even in reference to one and the same work the Spirit should have its part, and we our part? As when a musician plays upon an instrument, hath not the musician and the instrument each of them a contribution towards the melody? The strings do not sound without being touched, nor is that sound made by touching any thing but those strings. We cannot say in that case, that the musician and the instrument have each of them so their part, as that one note is from the musician and another note from the instrument; but both the musician and the instrument contribute to every note. And so it is plainly here, as to all the holy and spiritual motions and actings of a renewed soul; our spirits and the blessed Spirit of God have a kind of co-operation in reference to every particular act; which plainly shews that we have our part all along, and much more an active part than that similitude we used can serve to represent.

3. Were it not so, that we have such a part incumbent upon

us, all the precepts that contain in them the duty which is charged upon us, (that is, which we ought to call duty, because they are precepts in which it is contained,) would be mere nullities; and so that duty would be no duty. It would indeed evacuate and nullify the whole law of God, and all the precepts that are in his book of one kind or another. For if we have no part belonging to us, then his precepts oblige us to nothing; and that which obliges to nothing, is no obligation: and so it were an apprehension in the tendency of it, directly subversive of the whole frame of the divine government: all his laws over us would carry no signification with them at all. Especially what sense could we make of such laws as these, that do in general express the whole of a christian's course? This, for instance, in the text, "Walk in the Spirit?" Which you have with so much solemnity introduced in another verse of this same chapter; "This I say, Walk in the Spirit; and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," ver. 16. This I say; here would be great solemnity used for no purpose, the precept would carry no signification of a precept at all. And so of other such like scriptures. Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, Eph. 6. 10. Be strong; What doth that say to us? what doth it mean? Can we tell how to make ourselves strong, and by the Lord's strength? It plainly shews, that regenerate ones have somewhat to do, upon the doing whereof they may expect the communications of the Spirit. So, Eph. 4. 18. Be ye filled with the Spirit. What a strange thing were it to give us such a precept as that, that we should be filled with the Spirit, if we had nothing to do in order thereto! It doth indeed manifestly imply the Spirit's communicativeness, its aptness to communicate itself in all suitable and needful influences: and if we should not understand it so, the words would carry but such a sound, such a faint sound with them, as those that are supposed to be spoken by some charitable man, that should say to one in necessity, naked, and destitute of daily food, "Be thou warm, be thou filled;" but yet gives nothing needful for the body, James 2. 15, 16. And what! Shall we dare to imagine, that the Spirit of God, that Spirit of love and grace, should indite such words as these, "Be ye filled with the Spirit," and yet be altogether unapt to give that which should be needful to the soul? It doth plainly hold forth therefore the communicativeness of the Holy Ghost. But then it doth hold forth also a part incumbent upon us, somewhat to be done by us, whereupon we are to expect such a communication, and in a stated course; and not to expect it otherwise, or upon other terms; whatever

it may arbitrarily and from a sovereignty and royalty of grace do, as it many times doth.

4. Otherwise all the holy and gracious principles, all the graces of the Spirit, were put into the soul in vain; they were needless and useless things. For pray, what use can we conceive them to be of, but only to dispose the soul for holy and gracious actings? And then sure it must have something to do. The frame and shape of every thing doth discover, even to a man's eye, what it was made for: the very shape of this or that utensil shews its use, and what purposes it will serve for. So the whole frame of the new creature, all the several principles that are ingredient into the constitution of it, plainly shew what they are for. And the Spirit of God doth expressly tell us, Eph. 2. 10. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which he hath before ordained that we should walk in them. "We are his workmanship:" this is a piece of work wrought and done upon the soul, on purpose to fit him for the doing of good works: it is a very strange thing if yet it should have nothing to do. We might as well suppose, that the apt shape and frame of this or that instrument did contribute nothing to the use; a musician might as well play upon a log as upon a lute. Why should there be that curious workmanship, as there is wrought in every renewed soul, if all those principles are to lie dead, and there is no work to be done by such a soul? What is the grace of repentance for, but that the soul might turn to God? What is self-denial for, but to take it off from self? Mortification towards this world, but to loose and unhinge the soul from that, that so it may be in a posture disengaged and free for the course of holy spiritual motion? What is love for, but that it may move vigorously and delightfully? Fear, but that it may move regularly? Humility, but that it may move equally? Patience, but that it may move steadily, and so as not to be diverted by the evils that it meets with in the way? Take every particular grace severally, or take the entire frame of all together, and the very frame shews us what the new creature was for, that it was not to do nothing, and therefore sure that there is somewhat to be done.

5. Were it not so, this great absurdity would follow, that not only the Spirit of God was to be the agent, (which indeed is itself absurd enough) but that that alone is to be denominated the agent of every work that is to be done. Not only might it be truly said, that the Spirit of God repents and believes; but that it alone doth so: and consequently that there was no believer in all the world, no penitent, no obedient person; but only that these names ought to be given to the Spirit of God.

6. The matter is hence plain, that the Scripture doth manifestly say, that such and such things are done by the people of God. It is owned concerning them, that they "do believe, they have believed, they have received the word," and the like; they have "turned to the Lord from dumb idols," they have had "their labour of love," their approved works. I know thy works, I know by way of approbation that thou hast done so and so. And it being plain, that they are said to be the doers of such and such actions; either they do them as duty, as things incumbent upon them to do, or not: if as duty, we have what we seek: if not, then all such persons doing such works must be said to have done more than their duty: but certainly our own hearts will tell us, if we consider, that do what we can we always fall abundantly short.

These things make it plain enough, that there is a part incumbent upon us to do, and that it is not the business of the Spirit of God to do all, in the matter of the Christian life. It was necessary to insist upon this; because, if we do not admit the principle into our hearts, however it may hover in our mind and notional judgment, we can never admit into our hearts any conviction of our neglects of God, nor any impression of the many exhortations and incentives that we have unto greater diligence in the business of our Christian walk. We shall but faintly charge ourselves, and easily put off all with saying, the Spirit of God did not act; and think ourselves very innocent and harmless all the while, though we only trifle and loiter in the great business of Christianity all our days. If we own the principle, that we ought to be doing and walking, as we profess ourselves to be living christians; why do we carry the matter, as if we believed it not? why do we stand still, as if we had nothing to do, as if we could not find our hands? Alas! how little is there among us of that which ought to go under the name of Christian walking! How little can we find in ourselves, upon a serious review of the things done by us from day to day, concerning which we can say, "These were a real part of the Christian walk, and which ought to be referred thither!" Surely, while we so slothfully sit still and do nothing, it is very needful we should be put in mind and have it urged upon us, that we have *not nothing* to do; that we cannot sit still, as having no business, but only as those that mind it not.

III. Inference. We may farther infer hence, not only our obligation to a part incumbent upon us, but also our impotency to walk as we should alone. If it belongs to us as living christians, both as our privilege and duty, to walk in the Spirit; both do argue, that we cannot walk alone as we ought, that we cannot walk acceptably and so as to please God, by ourselves.

Such a charge as this laid upon us, "to walk in the Spirit," carries a plain signification, how incompetent we are for managing the course of our Christian walk without the Spirit. They that walk by the power of another, being acted and supported and borne up; though their walking imports that they do somewhat; yet plainly shew, by their walking so sustained, their impotency to steer that course of themselves. And it is needful, that the conviction of this too, do sink a great deal deeper with us than commonly it doth; that we can do nothing alone of the proper business that appertains to the Christian life; not so much as move a step, or draw a breath, or think a thought; not so much as think any thing, as of ourselves, 2 Cor. 3. 5.

This also is a thing, that is easily assented to, as soon as we hear it: but there is a very great difference to be made, between assenting to such a thing as an opinion, that we think carries with it a very plausible pretence for our own sloth, and having ourselves possessed with a deep and serious sense of it, as a thing plainly spoke out to us by the word of God, and whereof we find an inward experience in our own souls. We are very carefully to distinguish between these two. It is a very common pretence among people, that they can do nothing, no good thing without God, they are impotent to every thing that may have any tendency to their own salvation or to his glory; most profess to believe this, as soon as they hear the words spoken: but it is too apparent by the course that most hold, that this is only an opinion taken up, as supposed to carry a very favourable aspect upon their own sloth; and not that really they are of this faith. It is but a mere assumed opinion with them; not a part of their faith, nor a piece of their experience concerning themselves, that "without God they can do nothing."

It is plain enough, that persons may hold things as an opinion, that have no influence at all to govern their practice, notwithstanding that they are things in their own nature never so practical, or that ever so much concern practice. And it is of some necessity to us to consider, how impotent and ineffectual a thing mere opinion is to govern a man's practice. And to make way for this; that you may see that men hold this doctrine of their own impotency unto any spiritual good but as an opinion, without ever understanding the grounds of it, or without ever considering of what use it should be, or what course they are to take agreeable to such an apprehension; we shall shew a little the insufficiency of mere opinion to regulate practice. Plain it is, that many things that are in their own nature most practical, men have opinions about, which never influence their practice at all. It is a common thing for men

in the whole course of their lives to run counter to an opinion which they hold; as I might instance in sundry of the greatest things, that one can think of. Men are of this opinion, that God is the supreme and rightful Governor of the world; and yet have his laws and authority all their days in contempt. They are of this opinion, that God is omniscient, knows their hearts, and beholds all their ways; and yet never care to approve themselves to his eye in the temper of their spirits or the course of their walking. They are of opinion, that all men as sinners are naturally liable to the wrath and justice of God; and yet never go about to flee from the wrath to come. They are of opinion, that there is a judgment to come, and a state of retribution after this life for what hath been done in it; and yet never make it their concern to be sure, that they are not miserable hereafter, cast in judgment, doomed to perdition, but adjudged to live. Men in their whole course, even all their days, run directly contrary to their own opinion, in the greatest and most important things, that can be imagined; and that shews that it is a mere opinion: for a real, thorough belief of so great and important things, would certainly make other kind of work in their hearts and lives.

And because it is so plain in the general, that men may run all their time against their opinion, and guide their practice quite contrary to their opinion about practical things; it concerns us here to be a little more strict in our inquiry, whether it be not so in this particular case; that is, that men do hold the doctrine of their impotence for spiritual good but as an opinion, which they the more readily comply with, because they think it looks with a very favourable aspect upon that slothful, lazy course, which it is most agreeable to them to hold, and which they are very loth to alter. In this case, it doth them never the more good for being a true opinion; but the mischief to them is, that they hold it but as an opinion and no otherwise: which will appear, if you consider four things. If they held such a truth otherwise than as an opinion, if they believed it with a real faith and experienced the truth of it; it must, in conjunction with the things that I am to mention, make strange impressions upon their spirits, and alterations in their course, beyond what it is found to do. For,

1. Together with this apprehension, that they are impotent, and cannot of themselves walk as they should so as to please God, they also know or might easily know, that they do not walk so, as to have reason to think, that God is pleased with their walking. They may find upon a very easy reflection, that they do not walk in the Spirit: one would think it impossible for many of the looser sort of the professors of Christianity

to resist the evidence of so plain a thing, if they ask themselves the question; "Can I say, my course and walking is like walking in the Spirit, such as that I dare entitle the Spirit to it as its author?" What! Is the Spirit the author of your minding earthly things so intently? of seeking yourselves? of casting away the thoughts of God and eternity and the other world? And is not this thy walk?" Must not many say so? Let that then be considered by them that say, they cannot walk so as to please God without the Spirit; must they not also be forced to say, that they do not walk in the Spirit? And then add to that,

2. The consideration whither these things tend. While they acknowledge, that to walk so as God may be pleased, without the Spirit, is not possible; that their present course is not a walking in the Spirit; and along with these, that it is absolutely necessary for them to walk in such a course, as that God may be pleased with their walking; certainly it would put a reasonable, considering soul into a distress, if he would but lay these things together: "I cannot walk as I should without the Spirit, and I find I do not walk according to the Spirit, yet it is necessary for me that I should do so." What should be the end of this? Must it not needs be to put the spirit of a man, if he will reasonably consider it, into the greatest agonies imaginable? None pretend to hold this doctrine of their own impotency, but the same persons will say that they hold too, that it is necessary for them to please God in their walking. Now while no suitable impression is made, no lively concern excited, answerable to the exigency of such a case; is it not plain, that all this is but mere opinion, a hovering opinion and no more? especially if we should add hereto the considering,

3. That the Spirit is not tied to their time: and that no doubt they will grant also. If now they have not the Spirit to influence their walking and enable them in the course of it, they cannot promise themselves that they shall have it the next hour or the next day or the next year.

4. They know withal, that they are not masters of their own time; and they do not know but that their time may be over and expired, before that blessed Spirit, so often neglected and slighted and resisted, shall ever breathe or do any effectual work upon their souls.

These are things all of them as obvious as that other, that they are of themselves impotent. But take all these things together, and if there were more than mere opinion in the matter, certainly it could not but put such a soul into the greatest distress imaginable. "What shall I do? what shall I think of my case? which way shall I turn myself? The way wherein I

walk I am sure cannot please God; I cannot walk better without his Spirit; that Spirit doth not breathe or move in me in order to my better walking; I cannot command that Spirit; my time may shortly be over; I may be dead and gone out of this world for ought I know, before that Spirit ever come to have any acquaintance with my spirit, any commerce with it, and then what will become of me?"

All this I urge to this purpose, that it may be taken notice of and reflected upon, how little it signifies for men to have such an opinion of their own impotency, while it is an opinion and no more, while it makes no impression and has no suitable effect. If it were firmly believed, it would certainly infer this, that a soul that finds it can of itself do nothing, would be put upon loud and importunate cries to him, who can help us to do all, and who must do all, that is, do the part appertaining to him in all and in every thing that is to be done by us in order to our eternal well-being. But to lie still with the apprehension that I can do nothing, when (as the case doth signify) if I can do nothing I must perish, supposing that nothing be done by a higher and a stronger hand; and to be unconcerned whether that hand ever touch my heart, ever come near me, yea or no: this is a dreadful and a monstrous thing, and might make men amazed at themselves; that they can profess to believe a doctrine that carries with it a face of so much terror to their own souls, and never be startled at it; be well pleased that it casts a favourable aspect upon their sloth, while it carries a most frowning one upon their safety: unless it had that tendency with it, (which in most it hath not,) to bring men upon their knees, and to set them on crying and importuning for that grace and Spirit, without which it is true we can do nothing, and without which therefore nothing but perishing is to be looked for.

SERMON XIX.*

THERE are yet some farther inferences remaining from the subject we have been upon.

IV. Inference. Since it belongs to the state of persons living in the Spirit to walk in the Spirit; then we have great reason to admire the grace of the Spirit, that renders this a possible thing to us, to walk under its constant governing influence. But this I shall not insist upon, because there is no part or work and office of the Holy Ghost in reference to the spirits of men, on which we have insisted already, but hath given us some occasion to reflect upon its wonderful vouchsafement, that it would have so much to do with such as we are. But as this occasion is renewed to us of considering it, we should renew our observation and admiration of its strange condescension in this thing. For would any of us deign to be obliged to have from day to day the guiding and conducting of all the motions of a worm? And we do not need to be told, how much less considerable we are in reference to the great God and the blessed Spirit, than any the most despicable worm is to us.

V. Inference. Since it belongs unto the state of persons that own themselves christians or to live in the Spirit, (for to own Christianity, and to pretend to a life in the Spirit, is all one; those that profess themselves christians, do not profess

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themselves dead christians, but living ones;) since it belongs, I say, to such to walk in the Spirit; then we may too plainly collect, that there are very many going under that name, that walk so, as doth not belong to the state unto which they pretend. A plain and sad collection! as the apostle speaks, Phil. 3. 18. Many walk, as I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, as enemies of the cross of Christ: as those who are driving on a continual hostility against Christianity, and the design for which Christ was crucified. I doubt there is not less cause now for such a complaint, but only less sense. It is very observable, how great a stress is laid upon the visible decorum of a christian's walk, up and down in Scripture; how they are required to be noted that walk disorderly; how earnestly christians are exhorted and besought to walk becomingly and laudably, so that loveliness and amiableness, might appear in their walk. I (Paul) the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, Eph. 4. 1. And he saith to the Thessalonians, 1 Epis. 2. 12. Ye know, how we have exhorted and comforted, (or, encouraged) and warned every one of you, even as a father doth his children; that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory. And in the epistle to the Colossians, he prays on the behalf of them, as we find him elsewhere praying for others, (chap. 1. 10.) that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing; so as to make a fair representation of him to the world, that he might be thought well of among men for the sake of them that bear his name and own a relation to him. And so to walk, that is, such worthy and becoming walking, and walking in the Spirit, do manifestly imply one another. Whatsoever is worthy, honourable, graceful in the conversation of christians can never be wanting, if their conversation be under the constant government and regulating influence of this Spirit. And if the conversation of any be otherwise governed in the general course and tenour of it, it is plain that it is under the government of some other principle. Do but see, as to this, the proportionable opposition between two passages, namely, this of the text, If ye live in the Spirit, walk also in the Spirit, and that in Col. 3. 7. In which ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them: referring to what was mentioned before and after, fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry, (ver. 5.) and to anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communications, &c. ver. 8. &c. The course of any one's motion is so conform and agreeable to the principle that lives and rules with him. If we live in the Spirit, we walk in

the Spirit; as it is most befitting we should: but if we live in the flesh, that is, under the government and dominion of fleshly principles, accordingly we shall walk; our walking will easily shew, what principle is *regnant* and in dominion.

It would therefore be worth our while here, to point out some particular things, that are too observable in the walkings of many, and import a most direct repugnancy and contrariety unto walking in the Spirit; which are a manifest disclaiming of it, as none of the governing principle of those who so walk.

1. A visible conformity to this world speaks a contrariety to walking in the Spirit, and a repugnancy to all its influences and dictates. Plain it is, that the Scripture frequently speaks of a spirit and a spirit, that differently and oppositely influence the walking of men. We are told of the spirit of the world, and of the Spirit that is of God, 1 Cor. 2. 12. And as here we read of walking in the Spirit, the blessed Spirit of God; so we read of another course of walking, according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience; among whom we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, Eph. 2. 2, 3. As the holy, blessed Spirit of God, wherever that rules, doth conform and frame the course and tenour of any one's conversations, in whom it so rules, unto the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, that course of walking that is directed and prescribed there: so the spirit and genius of the world doth conform men unto this world, and make them shape their course agreeable to it; as that expression with the emphasis signifies, Rom. 12. 2. συσχηματιζεσθε, Be not conformed, (be not configured) unto this world, so as that your visible shape, frame and mould, that appear obvious to every eye, should represent this world and hold an agreement with that; but Be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that we may prove (or, give proof) what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God; as those that are framed according to that, delivered up into the mould by which that will is revealed, to wit, that of the gospel-revelation; as in Rom. 6. 17 Now when the course of any men's walking is such as that of the men of the world in common, what doth it discover, but that these men are acted by the spirit of this world, are ingulphed and swallowed up of that spirit? one spirit animates both the world and them, and makes them one piece with this world. And if we should give characters of the worldly spirit, you would easily see what the walking and conversation of many doth bespeak to be the governing principle of their lives, or the spirit that influenceth their conversations. Plain it is, that the spi-

rit of this world is an atheistical spirit, a sensual and earthly spirit, a vain and proud, a malicious and contentious spirit. Concerning what is obvious in the walking of persons, agreeable unto such characters as these, give me leave a little to particularize.

(1.) A conversation or course of walking transacted in the continual neglect of God, is certainly a conversation governed not by the Spirit of God, but by the spirit of this world. Conceive of that Spirit, under what notion you will; they that walk under the governing influence of the Spirit of God, walk as before God: Walk before me, and be thou perfect, or upright, Gen. 17. 1. Walk as in God's sight, as under his eye; as that injunction again and again repeated to Abraham doth import. They walk in the fear of the Lord. Acts 9. 31. They, whose hearts must tell them upon reflection, "I do not use to walk in the fear of the Lord from day to day, my life is led as 'without God in the world,' as if I were my own, as if my ways were all in my own disposal, as if it were the sense of my heart, Who is Lord over me? I am under my own inspection, as if no account was to be taken of my walk;" it will be too plain for such to collect, that they walk not by the Spirit, or after the Spirit, or in the Spirit. For what! Do we think, that that blessed Spirit can be the author to us of our forgetting God and leading ungodly lives? Doth that cast his fear out of our hearts, which is peculiarly called the Spirit of the fear of the Lord? Isa. 11. 2. Doth that Spirit drive us away from God, or make us unapprehensive of his presence, or make us strangers to him or as persons unrelated?

(2.) A continued over-eager pursuit of the things of this world, speaks a conversation governed by the spirit of the world, and not by the Spirit of God. I shall not speak here of grosser sensualities, when it is the business of men's lives to satisfy the viler lusts of the flesh; about which the case is so plain, that they cannot have the face to pretend, that the Spirit of God should be the author of such things in their conversation. And the antithesis is plain, where we have the same precept before, at the 16th verse of this chapter: "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." So, fulfil the lusts of the flesh, and it is certain you do not walk in the Spirit; for the case is as broad as long. But there is what is more refined, what custom and common practice hath made less scandalous. It is hardly thought scandalous to be an earthly-minded man; one, all whose design and the whole business of whose life is, to lay up and amass together a great deal of the treasures of this earth. And it is a latent evil in very great part; for one man may be very busy in the affairs

of this world, and another the like, and yet we cannot tell where the hearts of one and the other are. There may be many good thoughts, many holy affections and actings of grace, intermingled with worldly affairs and business. But notwithstanding that, there is much (as I say,) of the air of a man's spirit to be seen in the constant course and tenour of his walking; a certain mien and deportment, that speaks the complexion of his soul. They that are after the flesh, savour the things of the flesh, and carry a scent with them that shews their spirits. We say, that such or such a course of walking, such a word, or such an action is *par homini, just like the man,* speaks the spirit of the man. When the apostle comes to distinguish between walking and walking, conversation and conversation; we see how the minding of earthly things, and having a conversation in heaven, are made the distinctive characters of men, Phil. 3. 19, 20. Our business now is to put persons severally upon reflection into their hearts and upon their own walking. It is no matter what we appear, or are thought of by one another: but it greatly concerns us to be informed ourselves, what principle or spirit it is that governs our walking, or hath the management of our conversation. And it is no such difficult, at least no impossible thing, upon a faithful scrutiny and frequent observation, to understand, what are the great designs that we are driving in this world, and in what channel the main stream of our actions and endeavours run; what are the thoughts of our hearts, what their secret dispositions and propensions. When worldly objects, and worldly thoughts and affections are most tasteful to us, and most habitual and customary, what shall we say concerning this case? When it is so through the whole course of our walking, who must govern this walk? Will we dare to entitle the Spirit of God unto the conduct and government of such a conversation as that? When my walking from day to day is nothing else but a continual tending towards this earth, a motion downward; is it the Spirit of God that so thrusts me down and depresses my spirit? Is it that, that makes me grovel in the dust, and lead the life of a worm, when I might lead that of an angel, when I might have my way above, as the way of the wise is?

(3.) A contentious course of life speaks the Spirit of God to be none of the governor of our walk, but another spirit most surely. When men love wrangles and contentions, cannot endure to live out of the fire, is the Spirit of God the author of that impure fire? It is very much to be observed, what the apostle hath reference to more immediately and directly in this very context, wherein the text lies. He first gives this precept of walking in the Spirit: "This I say

then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh," ver. 16. See what the foregoing verses are, ver. 14 15. All the law is fulfilled in one word, by love, (as he had said, ver. 13. By love serve one another.) For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." Upon which follows the 16th verse. The lusts of the flesh, which he hath more direct and immediate reference to there, are therefore those opposed to love, such as wrath and anger, envy and malice; which he speaks of, both afterwards in this chapter, and in other of his epistles. When he comes to enumerate the fruits of the flesh, how great a part do things of this nature bear in that enumeration! The works of the flesh are manifest. And after he had named some things more grossly sensual, (as adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,) and interserted idolatry and witchcraft; then comes hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings. And when he had been speaking in Col. 3. 5. of the earthly members, that must be mortified, and for which the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience; in the which, says he, to those Colossians, Ye also walked sometime, when ye lived in them: then he adds, But now put ye off all these: and as he had named before fornication, uncleanness, &c. so now he goes on with the enumeration, mentioning farther anger, wrath, malice, &c. And indeed, if we will not admit the apprehension deep into our souls, that it is the great business of the Spirit of God equally and alike to enliven and animate both parts of the law of God, to turn both tables into a living law, transcribing them out upon the hearts and spirits of men; we shall never understand the great work that is to be done upon our souls by the Spirit. We are to consider it as the Spirit of all love and goodness and benignity and meekness; and then we may easily apprehend what the fruits of this Spirit will be: The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth, Eph. 5. 9. It is the reproach of our age, and (which is worse than that,) of the Christian name, that there are so many that conjoin eminent pretences unto religion and spirituality with a froward, peevish, perverse, envious, spiteful, malicious spirit, as if it were possible for these things to consist. It is not strange indeed, that a worse spirit should assume and put on some appearances of a better; but you may be sure, that that better Spirit will never disguise itself by the appearances of the worse. This is the spirit of the world, a spirit that fills the world with nothing but violence and mischief, that shakes and agitates the world with perpetual commo-

tions; as it will be with it, till it dissolve and be burst asunder at last by the malignity of its own wickedness, and the wrath of God in a just conjunction therewith, coming upon the wicked. That spirit, and a just *nemesis*, that falls by way of punishment upon it, hath made the world so miserable a region, the very region of all miseries. So that any one may see, that the spirit of the world hath a great hold upon one, if things of this import are frequently observable in the course of his conversation.

(4.) A vain walk is a discovery, that a man's conversation is acted and influenced by the spirit of this world, which is a vain spirit. Such persons, who can never find a time wherein to be serious, who shew this to be a thing that their hearts abhor from, whom you will find always vain, though you should meet them never so often in a day; as if a serious thought fled from their spirits as none of its element, and could not tell how to dwell with them; the very countenance and shew of whose conversation discovers a continual vanity of spirit. What! will such persons dare to entitle the Spirit of God to this? Hath the Spirit of God the government of that man's walking, in which there is no face of seriousness, so that any one that sees hath reason enough to conjecture, that seriousness was never akin to his spirit or had any place in it? This is matter of very necessary self-reflection. We ought to commune with ourselves very strictly and closely about this thing. Do we think, that we are under the guidance of the Spirit of God, and yet from day to day are unacquainted with what it means to have serious thoughts and serious frames and dispositions of heart about us?

Thus far conformity to the world speaks an unsuitableness and contrariety to walking in the Spirit. There are some other things, that are thought to be out of that verge, and are really beside the more common and general course of this walk; which I shall mention under distinct heads from this, because I would speak of them as they are thought of. And therefore I add,

2. Opinionativeness in the business of religion. Many would little suspect this to be from the spirit of this world. And indeed it is not the very common course of this world to be much concerned about such matters. But no matter from what spirit it is, their own or a worse; it is not from the Spirit of God; that doth not influence their course. But take aright what I mean by the term, opinionativeness: I mean such as in their ordinary course from day to day either are wholly taken up about speculative matters that either really belong or that they affix to religion; or who only converse about

most practical matters speculatively, as if they were matters of mere opinion, and not to be turned or employed to practice at all. A course of walking so managed as this is, certainly is not governed by the Spirit of God; that is the author of no such persuasion to men. Men are apt to think, that they are very safe from sin and blame in this case, because they are things of religion that they are much concerned and taken up about. But what things? and how are they employed about them? Either they converse about the mere skirts and borders of religion, and keep as remote as they can from the heart and vitals of it, from having any commerce with such things: or, if the case be not so, then they presume (and it is a dreadful presumption,) to touch those most sacred things with sacrilegious hands; to alienate the great and deep things of God, that appertain to his kingdom and glory, from their proper and genuine purposes; that, whereas they should be the food of souls, and the maintenance of the spiritual life, they employ them only to feed curiosity, and so to satisfy a more refined lust. This is the very truth of the case; and so a great many, that are persons of more leisure and vacancy from worldly affairs, spend most of their time. It is doleful to think, that the design, for which such important things are revealed to men, should be so little understood, and so little complied with and answered; and that so great things should be perverted unto so mean and ill services. And it is sad to think of the injury, that such men do to their own souls; they go with famished souls from day to day, while they have most proper and suitable nutriment for them just at hand, but they will not touch, so as to taste or feed upon these things. Starving in the midst of plenty is their case: or, as if a sick man should have by him, in the midst of his languishing sickness, some vial of very choice and precious spirits, that in all likelihood would be relieving to him, and save him from death, but he keeps it by him, and will discourse to you very curiously and philosophically concerning the nature and virtues of this thing, yet never uses it, nor apprehends that he is concerned to use it, or that his case requires it; and so dies away with a medicine at hand all the while, that might have saved his life.

3. Formality in the business of religion. There are those, who think it cannot serve their turn to speculate all their days, and, therefore would practise somewhat. But what do they practise? They run in a common road of duties, in which their own hearts upon reflection must confess, that they never had the Spirit of God breathing, and never concerned themselves to have it so. Theirs is a religious course, and a course of practical religion; but transacted at the utmost distance from

the Spirit of God, so that it and their spirits have no communion from day to day in the whole. They keep up a course of prayer in their families, and it may be in secret, go to public assemblies, attend upon the ordinances of worship; but never find any impression upon their spirits, any warmth or vigour there, or a concern to look after any such thing. They think it well, that such a duty is over, and so that they have walked in a religious course, though strangers to God and his Spirit all their time.

4. The neglect of the very form itself. This is too known a thing among some persons; and that too under the very pretence of spirituality. They are too spiritual to be bound to any forms of worship, or any stated course of duties; and that they may be more spiritual, they cast prayer out of their families, and refuse, yea even disdain to live worshipping lives, as too mean for them. All these things speak a manifest repugnancy to walking in the Spirit. Sure it is not the governor of any such courses of walking as these are.

I shall shut up all with some brief reflections upon both parts of the text together.

Since it doth belong to the Spirit of God by office, as we have asserted, to maintain the life, and govern the walk and motions of christians; we should bethink ourselves, of how indispensable necessity the communications of the Spirit for these purposes are unto us, and how miserable a thing it is to be destitute of them. We may easily apprehend how necessary that influence is, without which we can neither live nor move; and how miserable to be without it. For represent we to ourselves the case of a poor languishing, decrepit creature, that is deprived of motive power; suppose him barely to live, to have only life enough to feel himself in a dying condition: now is not the case so with many christians, with some of those perhaps that have the root of the matter in them? They have but life enough to feel that they are consuming, and in a state wherein the things that remain are even ready to die! That they do not die, is by divine vouchsafement, and none of their care. What a sad case is this! And is it not yet worse with some? They have not life enough to take any notice or make inquiry, whether they live or no: as persons that have some life left, yet may be uncapable of considering whether they are alive or dead. Many christians are so far from having that motive power, that is to be exercised in the managing of their own walk, and that would be so if it were not through their own default; that they are so altogether destitute also of any presence and vital influence of the Spirit, as never to consider the

case, "Am I alive or dead?" certainly this is a miserable case. And I may add,

Where there is manifestly such a destitution, there are some things very intolerable, which yet are too obvious and frequent with many such. As,

1. It is intolerable in the case, to lay aside the apprehension of the distinction between natural and spiritual life, natural motion and spiritual. You may judge, whether the mention of this be not a most apparently needful thing. Are there not a great many, that spend away their days without so much as ever considering, that there is such a thing as spiritual life and motion, or a region all replenished with spiritual vitality, a distinct sphere from that of nature wherein alone the rest of men do converse? They never think of such a distinction between world and world; an orb of spiritual life, and that mean and lower orb, wherein only a low kind of animality fills up all.

2. It is an intolerable thing in this case, to be unapprehensive of what others find of the power and vigour of that other Spirit moving in them, even the Spirit of God. There are some, that through grace (though that is not to be vaunted of, and whereof it becomes none to make a boast:) feel the stirrings of another principle in them different from the spirit of this world: they feel themselves to live, and to be acted in their walk by a spring of life that is from above. Those that are without the experience of such a thing, will not believe there is any such thing; as if their knowledge were to measure all realities; as though they were persons commensurate in their understandings and experience with the whole nature of things. This is just for all the world, as if a languid person, that hath been long confined to his chamber and bed, should come to fancy, that his chamber and bed were all the world, and that there was nothing done among mankind but what he saw transacted in his own chamber: or, if we should imagine a thinking power to be in the grave, and fancying a grave to be the universe.

3. It is intolerable, to be unconcerned about our own part and share in the world and region of spiritual life and motion, of which we have been speaking. If there were a line to be drawn through the world to sever in it the living from the dead, and a public notification were made of this all the world over; would we not then be very much concerned, on which side of the line we placed ourselves, that it might be where we could live? But how strange is it, that in this case many are altogether unconcerned, whether they are of the living or the dead side! Lastly,

4. It is a most intolerable thing, to make no applications to this Spirit, after we know its distance. We know it is the Author of life, and the Governor of all holy motions unto all the children of God; and yet never apply to it, never put up a sigh or a cry! How intolerable is this! Do we know of any other way to live? Do we think, that there can be such a thing as everlasting life, a life which shall never end, and which shall also never begin? Sure if there be such a life, it must sometime begin: and where will we place the beginning of it, but in the communication of that spiritual, vital influence, which once given is a spring of living waters, springing up unto life eternal?

Let us so therefore represent the matter to ourselves; the high dignity, the immense fulness, the royal magnificent bounty and benignity of this blessed Spirit; that we may neither neglect it, nor distrust it. Represent the tendency of all its communications, and consider them as the earnests and pledges of everlasting life, the blossomings of glory; that which must be our preparation for, and our assurance of, the eternal state of life. And then desire such communications above all things. Let this be the sense of our souls, (sure there is reason enough, that it should be so;) "Lord, let me rather live in poverty, live in pain and sickness, live in disgrace all my days, than live without thy Spirit! Let not that Spirit be a stranger to me, but inhabit and dwell in me, act and move me; and be my condition what it will in all external respects, I am unsolicitous, I will never capitulate, never dispute the matter." Till that Spirit come to be valued by us, and all its communications, even above all things else that men are wont to count dear to them, we have reason to apprehend, that it and we are like to continue still strangers; and if we be strangers to the divine Spirit, we must be acquainted with misery both in this and another state.

THE

PROSPEROUS STATE

OF THE

CHRISTIAN INTEREST,

BEFORE THE END OF TIME,

BY A PLENTIFUL EFFUSION

OF

The Holy Spirit;

CONSIDERED

IN FIFTEEN SERMONS.

ON

Ezek. xxxix 29.

TO THE READER.

I apprehend little occasion to make an apology for the publication of the following discourses. They who relish Mr. Howe's inimitable spirit of piety, judgment, copiousness and force in the management of every subject he hath undertaken, will be glad of any remains of so great a man; and those who have been conversant with his writings, will hardly want any other voucher, besides the sermons themselves, that they are genuine, they so evidently carry in them, to a person of taste, the marks which always distinguish his performances.

They have not indeed had the advantage of his own masterly hand to prepare them for the press, and to give them their last finishing; but were his discourses from the pulpit, taken first in shorthand by the hand of a very ready and judicious writer, who afterwards copied them out fair with the minutest exactness, as they were delivered. This very precise accuracy made it necessary, that they should be transcribed anew, before they saw the light. This I have adventured to do, without the alteration or addition of any one thought. But, in discourses delivered by a preacher without notes, some repetitions naturally occur in the pulpit; and very usefully, to enable the hearer to discern the connexion of the discourse as he goes along, and to make the deeper impression. These might appear tedious to a reader, who hath the whole before him; and therefore are omitted, farther than they seemed to carry a peculiar emphasis, or than a different representation of the same thought was apprehended to convey the idea with greater force. The writer appears to have religiously followed the very words of the author, when he cited passages of Scripture by memory. It was judged proper to consult the texts themselves, and to cite them

as they lie in the Bible; except where the author might be supposed out of choice to substitute another english word, as more expressive of the sense of the original. The repetition also of former discourses at the beginning of another sermon hath been omitted where nothing new occurred. But where a new thought is suggested, in such a repetition, it hath been carefully inserted in its proper place. This is all the variation I have allowed myself to make from the copy; and so much I apprehend will be accounted reasonable and necessary by all that are acquainted with such things.

The subject can hardly fail to be particularly acceptable. The reverend author hath often indeed expressed in general the same catholick sentiments in several of the works which he published himself; and shewn his mind to have been uniformly the same as here, upon that head, wherein the prosperity of the Christian interest lies: that it consists not in the advancement of any party among christians as such, or of any distinguishing name, or in any mere external forms; but in real vital religion and conformity to God. He hath also more than once intimated his expectation of better times for the church of God, than the present state of it. But he hath no where so professedly and distinctly explained his sentiments concerning the latter days of the Christian church, as in these discourses.

They were all preached in the course of a Wednesday-lecture, which he formerly kept up at Cordwainer's-hall in this city: and all within the year 1678, as appears by the dates prefixed to each. A time, wherein he was in the vigour of life and height of judgment, between forty and fifty years old: and within a few years after his settlement with that congregation of protestant dissenters, where he ministered till his death. That was a time of peculiar distress and danger, not only to protestants out of the legal establishment in these kingdoms, but to the reformed interest in general through Europe. This may be supposed to have engaged his thoughts in so long attention to this subject, which animates with the hope of better times to come.

There are other discourses immediately preceding these at the same lecture, concerning the work of the Spirit in every age upon particular persons;* as these relate to his work upon the Christian community, to be expected in the last age. A copy of those sermons, drawn up by the same writer, is fallen into the hands of a very worthy brother of this city, by as unexpected a providence as these came into mine. I hope he may be prevailed with to introduce them into the world, if those which are now offered meet with a favourable reception. And both these volumes together, will contain the sum of this great man's sentiments concerning the important doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

If any inquire, why these sermons were not inserted in the late collection of Mr. Howe's works in folio: I answer; beside that it

* These are printed first in this volume in the order in which they were preached.

was resolved to insert none there, but those which he had published himself; so, if it had been thought proper to add more, the copy of these came not into my hands or within my notice, till that edition was made public.

Such an index cannot be judged needful to a particular discourse; as I thought proper to add to that collection, where the subjects treated of are so various. It appeared more useful here to give a view of his whole scheme upon the argument, by way of contents: and because of the felicity of this author in descants upon Scripture, an index of the texts, which he hath taken notice of, is added even to this short treatise.

May the great Lord of the harvest succeed the revived labours of our fathers, and the endeavours of those in the present age, who are called to serve him in the gospel; and still raise a seed to serve him, both in the ministry and out of it, which from time to time shall be accounted to him for a generation. This is the hearty prayer of

An unworthy Servant of

our common Lord,

Prescot-street,
Dec. 6th, 1795.

John Evans.

* In this edition, these are referred to the general index.

SERMON I*.

Ezek xxxix. 29.

Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God.

THE operations of the Holy Ghost may be considered either as relating to particular persons, in a single and private capacity; for the regenerating of souls, or implanting in them the principles of the divine and spiritual life; the maintaining of that life; the causing and ordering all the motions that are proper thereunto: or as having an influence upon the—felicity and prosperous state of the church in general.—For this last, the scripture that I have pitched upon, gives us a very plain and sufficient ground.

It is manifest, that it is a very happy and prosperous state, which is here referred unto, if you look back upon this and the foregoing chapters, the 36th, 37th and 38th, which are all congenerous, and as it were of a piece with this. You find such things copiously spoken of and promised, as we are wont to consider in the constitution of a prosperous happy state, in reference to what their case required; reduction from captivity, victory over their enemies, abundant plenty of all things, settled tranquillity and peace, entire union among themselves, both Ephraim and Judah, as you will find it expressed; the renewal of God's covenant with them, after their so great and

* Preached May 8th, 1678.

long-continued defection and apostacy from it; in which covenant he would be their God, and take them for his people, and have the relation avowed and made visible to all the world, that he and they were thus related to one another. These things you may find at large in the several chapters mentioned; importing all the favour that we could suppose any way conducible to make a people happy. And indeed the same thing is compendiously and summarily held forth in the words of the text themselves: "Neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God." We cannot in few words have a fuller account given of a happy state. To consider these words themselves; the contents of them are *first*—A gracious prediction: "Neither will I hide my face any more from them:" a prediction, or prophetic promise, or a promissory prophecy of a most happy state: and *secondly*.—The reason given hereof, why God would provide that all things should be well with them in other respects: "For I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord God."

There are two things, that must be the matter of a little previous inquiry, in order to our taking up what we are to insist upon from this scripture, namely,—The import of this negative expression; "Neither will I hide my face any more from them:" and,—How we are to understand the subject of the promised favour here, as it is designed by this name, "the house of Israel."—These things being cleared, the matters that I intend to recommend to you and insist upon, will plainly result.

First, As to the former, what this negative expression should mean, "Neither will I hide my face any more from them." It is needful, that we may understand that, to know what the Scripture doth often mean, and may well be supposed to mean here, by "the face of God." It is very plain, that it frequently means his providential appearances, or the aspect of providence one way or another. And thus we are more frequently to understand it, when it is spoken of in reference to a community, or the collective body of a people; yea, and sometimes, when in reference to particular persons too. And hence it will easily appear, how we are to take the opposite expressions, of his "making his face to shine;" or of his "hiding, or covering, or clouding his face."

It appears from sundry scriptures, that by his—shewing his face, or—letting it be seen,—giving the sight of it, or—causing his face to shine, giving the pleasant sight of it, or—lifting up the light of his countenance,—(expressions of the same import,) the favourable aspect of providence is to be understood;

when these expressions are used, as I said, more especially in reference to the collective body of a people. And so the hiding of his face, signifies as much as the change of these more favourable aspects of providence, for those that are more severe and that do import anger and displeasure. For so, by the aspects and appearances of providence, it is to be understood, whether God be propitious and favourably inclined toward a people, or whether he be displeased and have a controversy with them: as it may be discerned in the face of a man, whether he be pleased or displeased. Wherefore you have anger and severity, which uses to be signified by providence, and as it is so signified, held forth to us under this same phrase or form of speech, Deut. 31. 18. I will surely hide my face in that day, for all the evils which they shall have wrought, in that they are turned unto other gods. See what the expression there is exegetical of, or with what other phrases it is joined, as manifestly intending the same thing; such as, his anger being kindled against them, and his forsaking them. It is interserted among such expressions again and again. So ver. 17. My anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them; and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befal them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us? In the same sense the word is used, chap. 32. 20. and in many other scriptures, in reference to bodies of men. And sometimes in reference to a particular person; as in Job 34. 29. When he gives quietness, who shall give trouble; and when he hides his face, who shall behold him? Who dare behold him, when clouds and frowns do eclipse that bright and pleasant light of his countenance before lift up, whether it be against a nation or a particular person? as there Elihu speaks. And he had been speaking before of the acts of providence, in lifting up and casting down at his pleasure, and according as men's ways and deportments towards him in this kind or that did make it most suitable and fit. And therefore also the church, being represented as in a very afflictive condition, exposed to the insultations of tyrannous enemies, and having suffered very hard and grievous things from them; this is the petition that is put up in the case, Turn us, and cause thy face to shine upon us, and we shall be saved. Psal. 80. 3. 19.

Therefore it is obvious to collect, what the like expression here must mean; "Neither will I hide my face any more from them." It must mean, that he would put them into a prosperous condition; the course of his providence toward them should be such as would import favour and kindness to them.

And, "Neither will I hide my face any more from them," imports the permanency and settledness of this happy and prosperous state; that it should not be a short, lucid interval only; but through a very considerable and continued tract of time this should be the posture and course of his providence towards them. And then

Secondly, For the subject of this promised favour, as it is designed here by the expression, "The house of Israel."

1. I doubt not but that it hath a meaning included, as it is literally taken, of that very people wont to be known by that name, "The house of Israel," the seed of Jacob.

2. But I as little doubt, that it hath a farther meaning too. And it is an obvious observation, than which none more obvious, that the universal church, even of the gospel-constitution, is frequently in the prophetical scriptures of the Old Testament represented by this, and by the equivalent names of Jerusalem and Zion, and the like. And the reason was as obvious as the thing itself; for they were the church of God, that people, and they who were proselyted to them: and the prophecies of the Old Testament we know were first and most immediately directed to them; and were more likely to be regarded by them, by how much the more the church, whom these prophecies did concern, was more constantly designed or set forth by their own name. It invited them to look towards the great things represented and held forth in these prophecies, as things wherein they had a special concern, and wherein their interest was bound up; though they had no reason to think, that they were things appropriate to them. And we find, that in the New Testament too the name is retained: "All are not Israel, that are of Israel. He is not a Jew, that is one outwardly:" He means certainly a christian. "I know the blasphemy of them that say they are Jews, and are not." Rom. 2. 28. Rev. 2. 9. And we have little reason to doubt, and there will be occasion to make it more apparent hereafter, that so we are to explain the signification of this name here; not to exclude the natural Israelites, but also to include the universal Christian church.

These things being thus far cleared, the ground will be plain upon which to recommend to you a twofold truth from these words; namely—That there is a state of permanent serenity and happiness appointed for the universal church of Christ upon earth, and—That the immediate original and cause of that felicity and happy state, is a large and general effusion or pouring forth of the Spirit.—It is the latter of these that I principally intend, and shall speak more briefly to the former.

But before I speak distinctly and severally to either of them,

I shall do what is not usual with me; that is, entertain you a while with somewhat of a preface, to give you therein an account in reference to both, and of the whole of the intended discourse upon this subject, what I design, and upon what score I think it useful and proper, that such a matter, as this is, be entertained into your consideration and my own. Herein I shall, *first* lay before you sundry things obvious unto the consideration of considering persons, that will serve for some representation of the state of the Christian church hitherto, and at this time, and as it may continue to be for some time hence. And then, *secondly*, shall shew you in some other particulars, what it is reasonable should be designed and expected in a discourse of this nature, and upon such a subject as this is, in way of accommodation to such a state of the case.

First. As to the former; these things I reckon very obvious to such as are of considering minds.

1. That the state of the Christian church hath been for the most part very calamitous and sad all along hitherto, in external respects. You know it was eminently so in the time of the first forming of the Christian church. The Christian name was a name every where spoken against; and they, that delivered themselves up to Christ, delivered themselves up to all manner of troubles and persecutions, even upon his account and for his name's sake. He foretold it unto his more immediate followers, that for his name they should be hated of all men; and they were to expect the most malignant hatred; and he told them too of the effects agreeable and suitable to such a principle. The church was externally miserable in the first ages of it by persecutions from without: and after it arrived to a state of some tranquillity and peace, by the favour of the world and its more gentle aspect upon it; after there was an Emperor of the Christian religion, that would own and patronize it against the rage and fury that it was pursued with before; then it soon bred trouble enough within itself, and grew factious and divided, and broken into parts, pestered with heresies, and filled with varieties of contending opinions and sects; and then these were continually the authors of troubles to one another, according as one or another could get opportunity to grasp power into its hand. This hath been the state of things with it all along, though there have been some more quiet intervals here and there, in this or that part of the Christian world. It can hardly be said, the church hath ever had any considerable season of tranquillity and serenity, universally and all at once, even in any time.

2. It is more obvious, as we may suppose, unto the most, that the state of the church is externally very miserable and sad

at this time. Those, that understand any thing of the world, cannot but know so much; and we need not to except that part of the church at home, as you all well enough know. In other countries christians are rolling and weltering in one another's blood; and you know the shattered state of things within ourselves.

3. By the present posture of affairs, the position and aspect of things, we cannot say that matters are in a tendency unto a better state; but have rather reason to fear, that all will grow worse and worse. Clouds gather and thicken, and grow blacker and blacker, and spread far and wide over the church of Christ in the world, and are very likely to discharge into very tremendous storms: according to human probabilities and experience nothing else is to be expected.

4. It is to be observed too, that there hath long been a retraction in a very great measure of the Spirit from the church. There was a gradual retraction soon after that large effusion of it at first in the apostles days; unto which in Acts 2. we find by Peter that scripture in Joel applied, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." Then they said it had its accomplishment; though I doubt not it is to have another and fuller accomplishment; as it is no unusual thing for the same prophetic scripture to be said to be fulfilled again and again: as that passage, "Out of Egypt I have recalled my Son," applied to the people of Israel and to Christ. A long continued retraction there hath been of that Spirit, which is the very life of that body; whose work and business it is to act and animate it in every part. We are not now inquiring concerning the cause of the retraction. Much must be referred to sovereign pleasure, more to justice: for undoubtedly God hath proceeded according to the tenour of his own rule, I will be with you, as long as you are with me; and he did never in any degree leave his people first, that bare his name. Union always begins on his part; breaches on ours. But notwithstanding that so large effusion of the Spirit at first, when the Gospel-light first dawned upon the world, and that pleasant spring of the Christian interest and religion that then appeared and shewed itself; how gradual was the languor, that set it a fainting and withering by steps and degrees, very discernible to those that look upon the histories of former days? Though yet the life and vigour was still much preserved, as long as the church was in a suffering state from without by the persecution of paganish enemies; as we know it was, for the three first centuries and more, in some degree and in some part of it.

But after once the world came to cast more benign aspects upon it, how soon did the life and vigour of the Christian church

evaporate and expire? So as that there seemed to be a body left in a great measure destitute of a soul; to allude to the expression that the prophet Jeremiah uses to the people of Israel, "Be instructed, lest my soul depart from you." The very soul of the church was in a great measure departed; departed unto that degree, that it was become such a mere piece of formality, that another religion takes the advantage to vie with the Christian; the most fabulous, the most vain, the most despicable, that could be invented; and of the most despicable original, from Mahomet, a mean, inconsiderable, ignorant, illiterate man; but a common soldier at the first, and yet the author of a religion so vastly spread in the world as it is at this day, and even so as to eat out Christianity in so considerable parts where it had obtained and taken place. This was argument enough of a great retraction of that Spirit, that made the Christian church and religion, while it was more visibly breathing, a mighty, majestic, awful, commanding thing.

About that time, when the apostacy in the Christian church became more visible, and the usurpation of the man of sin more explicit and avowed; that is, when Boniface the third obtained from Phocas the Emperor the grant of the primacy; about that very time, within sixteen years after, was the Alcoran framed. When the church was become so despicable, when the Christian religion was but a formality and shadow, then was the time to set up this despicable religion; and nothing more despicable could have been set up. Yet at a strange rate it hath vied, so as to carry against the Christian interest the cause so far, and unto so great a degree, and for so long a time.

And then, for the first setting up of that religion, a time was chosen by Satan on purpose. As the church history of those times doth acquaint us, there was no body to make opposition to the Mahometan dotages and delirations. In the eastern church they were all busy in propagating such and such opinions, that they were contending about, on the one hand and the other, amongst themselves. And in the western churches they were all engaged generally, and so very busy in inventing new forms and ceremonies and rites, that there was no body at leisure, not any of the doctors in the church to be found, (as the history tells us,) to make any opposition, or write any thing against the dotages of Mahometanism, that then first began to appear.

Afterwards, into how strange a darkness and stupidity did the Christian church and interest and religion sink? so that for several ages together there was an utter vacancy and destitution, not only of divine, but of all common human know-

ledge: nothing but the grossest and most horrid barbarism, that spread itself through the Christian church. And it was as bad, if we may not say worse, through the pride and tyranny of those that took upon them to be governors in the church; and the viciousness, immorality and sensuality, and all other kinds of wickedness, that abounded among the vulgar common sort. And so it continued, till some later stirrings and efforts towards reformation: which, how partial they have been, that is, in how small a part, and how imperfect and incomplete where they have been, and what recedations, there have been, where any thing hath been effected and done in that kind; those who know any thing of former and foreign affairs cannot but understand.

And even now at this day, to cast our eyes round about us, whether we take nearer or more remote views, alas! how little, how little is there to be discerned of the true spirit of Christianity! Yea how much, that speaks the very opposite thereunto, the spirit of the world! A spirit of malignity, that is working and striving and contending every where, and lurking under the profession, the usurped and abused profession of the Christian name! So that, to speak as the truth of the matter is, a christian is become but just like another man: and the Christian church just like the rest of the world. Christianity hath put on the garb of Paganism in worship in a great part of it; in manners and conversation in the most part, the far greater part.

5. It is to be observed and considered too, that we are still encountered with this twofold evil *at once* and *in conjunction*, wheresoever we cast our eye; that is, the state of the church externally calamitous and miserable, and the retraction of the Spirit: and the former of these still caused by the latter. This is very observable too, that these two things are in a connexion, and conjunct.

6. It is to be considered farther, that we are much more apt to be sensible of the effect, than of the cause; whether we hear of such effects abroad, or whether we feel or fear them at home. If we hear of great devastations of countries, towns sacked, battles fought, blood spilt, barbarous usages, and acts of violence done; we are struck with a smarter and quicker sense upon the report of these things, than if we be made to understand, how the religion of christians doth languish every where; or when we hear of the prevailing of pride and anger and malice and contention; or of formality, deadness, indifferency, lukewarmness in the things of God. That is, the evils, that are caused, affect us a great deal more, than those that we are to reflect upon as the cause, and which are all

comprehended in that one cause, the retraction of the Spirit, or that it is in so great a measure retired and withdrawn.

7. It is to be considered too, (as pursuant unto that last note;) that we are a great deal more apt to covet a state of external prosperity for the church, than the effusion and communication of the Spirit, and those things which would be the most direct issues and effects of that. Let us deal with our own hearts about this matter, and consider, whether we be not more taken, and it do not far more highly please our imagination, to represent to ourselves, or to have represented, a state of external tranquillity and prosperity to the church, wherein we think to have a part or share, or may have; than to have a representation made of such a state of things, wherein the life and power of godliness, the mortification of sensual lusts, eminent self-denial, and the serious intending and designing for heaven, should be things visible and conspicuous in every one's eye. Let us consider, whether the former of these do not take our hearts a great deal more than the latter, if it be not more pleasing and grateful to our thoughts. And again,

8. It is to be considered also, that many are apt to mistake, and to take wrong measures, of the Christian church, and the Christian interest, and the Spirit that breathes in and animates that church: that is, to reduce all these to the measure of this or that party, to which they have thought fit to addict themselves; and to judge it goes well or ill with the church, according as it goes well or ill with their own party; and to judge there is more or less of the Spirit, as there is more or less zeal for the propugning the interest of that party: and so the measures of the church, and the Christian interest are mistaken; but especially the Spirit of Christ most of all mistaken and misapprehended. The heats and fervours, which some have for a private, little, narrow interest of their own, are taken for that great, large, universalizing Spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ, that in all communications works with the greatest sweetness and benignity, and disposes the spirit of a man answerably herein to itself.

9. It is to be considered, that we are more apt to confine and limit our eye and thoughts unto what is present, than to extend them to what is future; whether the present state of things be good or bad, pleasing to us or unpleasing. For if the state of things be good, and such as pleases us, then we think a change will never come; our mountain is so strong, as never to be removed: and if it be bad, we are as apt to despond, that things must be always just as they are now, that it can never be better.

10. Those that do look forward unto what is future, if there be any representation set before them, any prospect of what is more pleasing and grateful to them, are more apt to be curious about the circumstances of such an expected state, than to be serious in minding the substantials that do belong to that state itself. And that vain curiosity to inquire, joined with an overmuch boldness in some persons to determine about the times and seasons, when such and such things shall be, hath certainly been no small prejudice unto the interest of the Christian religion in our days, upon a twofold account.. The disappointment hath dashed the hopes of many of the better sort; and confirmed the atheism of those of the worst sort. Those of the better sort, many of them that have allowed themselves to be so curious and bold, curious in their inquiries, and bold in their definitions and determinations; when they have found themselves disappointed, have been apt to conclude concerning all the concernments of religion, as concerning those wherein they have found themselves disappointed; as thinking, that their imagination was as true as the gospel about these things: and so, if they have not undergone the shock of a temptation to adhere more easily and loosely unto the Christian profession upon account of such disappointments; yet at least their spirits have been as it were sunk into despondency, because they relied upon false grounds, and which could not sustain a rational hope. And then the atheists and infidels have been highly confirmed in their scepticism and atheism, because such and such have been so confident of things, wherein they have been mistaken; and because they pretended to have their ground for their belief and expectation out of the Scriptures, therefore those Scriptures must sure signify nothing.

These things being considered, and we having the case so before us, as these things taken together do represent it; then,

Secondly. That, which is reasonable to be designed and expected in discourses of this nature, and concerning such a subject as we have here before us, should be comprized within such particulars as these.

1. To establish the belief of this thing in the substance of it, being a thing so very plain in the Scripture; that there shall be a permanent state of tranquillity and prosperity unto the church of Christ on earth. So much, I doubt not, we have a sufficient ground for, in the word of truth, and even in this very prophecy which this scripture hath relation to; as we may have occasion farther to shew.

2. To settle the apprehension fully (that we should aim at on both sides; I in speaking, and you in hearing,) of the con-

nexion between an external prosperity, and this internal flourishing of religion in the church, by the communication of the Holy Ghost in larger and fuller measures of it: the connexion of these with one another reciprocally, so as that there can never be an externally happy state unto the church without that communication of the Spirit; and that with it there cannot but be, if we speak of the freeing of it from intestine troubles, which will be the only things that it shall be liable to annoyance from in all likelihood in a further course and tract of time.

Take the former part of this connexion, that is,—that without such a communication of the Spirit an external state of tranquillity and prosperity to the church can never be;—we should design the fixing of this apprehension well: for certainly they are but vain expectations, fond wishes, to look for such prosperity without reference unto that large and general communication of the Spirit. Experience hath done very much in several parts of the world, if we had no prospect nearer us, to discover and refute the folly of any such hope, that any external good state of things can make the church happy. How apparent is it, that if there should be never so much a favourable aspect of time, yet if men are left to their own spirits, and acted only by them, all the business will presently be for one person to endeavour to lurch another, and to grasp and get power in their hands! And then they will presently run into sensuality, or make it their business to serve carnal and secular interests, grasping at this world, mingling with the spirit of it. Thus it cannot but be, it must be, if an effusion of the Spirit be not conjunct in time with any such external smiles of time. There can be no good time unto the church of God, without the giving of another Spirit, his own Spirit. That, or nothing, must make the church happy.

And that cannot but do it; which is the other side of the connexion. For let us but recount with ourselves, what it must needs be, when such a Spirit shall be poured forth, as by which all shall be disposed and inclined to love God, and to devote themselves to him, and to serve his interest, and to love one another as themselves, and each one to rejoice in another's welfare, so as that the good and advantage of one shall be the joy and delight of all! When men shall have no designs one upon another, no endeavours of tripping up one another's heels, nor of raising themselves upon one another's ruins! This cannot but infer a good state of things, excepting what may be from external enemies. It is true indeed, that when there was the largest communication of the Spirit that ever was in the church, yet it was molested by pagans: but

then it was not troublesome in itself, it did not contend part by part with itself. And if the communication of the Spirit, as we have reason to expect in the latter days, be very general, so as not only to improve and heighten the church in respect of internal liveliness and vigour; but also to increase it in extent, as no doubt it will; then less of trouble is to be feared from without. But we shall still be miserable, and it cannot be avoided but we must be so, if with the smiles of the times a large communication of the Spirit be not conjunct. It is also to be designed in such a discourse,

3. To mind more what is substantial in that good state of things, whereof we speak, than the circumstances that belong thereto; and especially than the time and season, when it may be hoped any such good state of things shall commence. And that we may be taken off from too much busying ourselves about that, I shall shut up all with two or three considerations: As,

(1.) That to have our minds and hearts more set upon the best state of things that it is possible the church should ever arrive to on earth, than upon the state of perfect felicity above, is a very great distemper, and which we ought to reckon intolerable by any means to indulge ourselves in. We know, none of us can live in this world but a little while; and that there is a state of perfect rest and tranquillity and glory remaining for the people of God. We have therefore no pretence for being curious in our inquiries about what time such or such good things may fall out to the church of God in this world. It is a great piece of fondness to cast in our own thoughts, Is it possible that I may live to see it? For ought we know, there may be but a hand's breadth between us and glory, if we belong to God; to-morrow may be the time of our translation. We ought to live in the continual expectation of dying, and of coming to a better state than the church can ever be in here. It argues a great infirmity, a distemper in our spirits, that we should reflect upon with severity, if we should be more curious to see a good state of things in this world, than to see the best that can ever be, and infinitely better than we can think, in heaven. And,

(2.) That, as for that part of the good condition of the church, which consists in the communication of the Spirit; so much of it as is necessary for us we may have at any time, if we be not wanting to ourselves, and are of those that belong to God, any of that seed that by this Spirit have been raised up to Christ. It must be our fault, if we have not so much of the Spirit as is requisite for our comfortable walking with God in this world. And I add hereupon,

(3.) That that which is common to all times, yea and common both to time and eternity, certainly ought to be the greatest thing with us, and upon which our hearts should be most set. Let us but be intent upon this, to get a large measure of the Spirit into our own souls; this may be had at any time, if we do not neglect ourselves and the rules that God hath set us: and this is a thing common to time and eternity. They that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting, Gal. 6. 8. And therefore look we upon things according to the proper importance of them, and what they carry in themselves. Sure I am, that without much of the Spirit all the best things, that this world can afford me, will never do me the least good: I may be a great deal the worse for them, but never a whit the better. But if I have much of this Spirit, things can never go ill with me; I shall be carried through whatever hardships shall fall to my share; and be within the compass of my lot, while I am in this world; and never regret the thought of them, when once I arrive to the other shore; but forget all these troubles, like the waters that pass away, as the expression is in Job 11. 16.

SERMON II.*

SUCH things having been forelaid, we may adventure to enter upon the consideration of the former of the truths proposed, namely,—That there is a state of tranquillity and prosperity appointed for the church of God, for some considerable tract of time here in this world.—And concerning that, there are two things that I shall labour to evince to you; namely,—that it is a very happy and prosperous state, which these words do manifestly import and refer unto; and,—that that state is yet future; or that what is here predicted concerning it is not yet fulfilled.

I. That it is a very happy state of things that is here referred unto, is plain from the very import of the words of the text. "Neither will I hide my face any more from them." What can we conceive desirable, which these expressions may not be understood to signify? But if we understand them to signify only a state of external prosperity, (and because any farther meaning, which the words in themselves might admit of, is fully carried under the other expression of his pouring out his Spirit; and that is made causal of this, and nothing can be a cause to itself; therefore we do understand them only of outward prosperity;) yet surely that must be a very happy and prosperous state, which such an expression is chosen to signify; that God will shine upon them with most benign aspects of

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providence. What can go amiss with a people, upon whom he doth so?

And if we consider the reference of these words unto what goes before, and the place which they have in that series of discourse, with which they stand connected, and wherein they make a part; it will be very evident upon review, that they have reference to a very happy state of things foretold. If you consider the whole book of these prophecies, you will find, that any thing consolatory unto this people, directly and properly said to them, except what is occasionally here and there let fall, doth but begin with the 36th chapter. The former chapters of this book are either full of reprehensions or comminations of the people; the first twenty-four chapters are generally taken up so: or else in predictions of judgment and vengeance upon their enemies; (which doth collaterally and on the by import favour to them;) the Edomites, and the Egyptians, and the Amorites, the Moabites, the Philistines, the Tyrians, and the Sidonians. Sundry of the following chapters after the twenty-four first are taken up so. But these four lying here all connected together, (the 36th, 37th, 38th, 39th,) are wholly taken up in comfortable predictions unto this people, speaking of their happy state in themselves; though also the destruction of such enemies, as did most stand in the way of that promised felicity, is here and there interserted. And then all the following chapters, the 40th, and the rest to the end, are a continued prophetical and emblematical description of the settled happy state, wherein they should be, after they were restored; as in the description of the meaning and building of the city and temple you see at large. And if we should go to point out particulars to you, you will find, that such as these do properly and fully lie up and down in these chapters that I have mentioned, and which seem to be all of a piece congenerous unto one another.

1. Their reduction from their captivity; that they shall all be brought back and gathered out of the several heathen nations of the world, where they were scattered and dispersed to and fro.

2. The reparation of all desolation, the great building of their wasted cities.

3. The great fruitfulness of their land. I will not direct you to the particular passages, where these things are mentioned; but you may at your leisure view over these chapters, and you will find them all.

4. The great multiplication and numerousness of their inhabitants.

5. Their most entire victory and conquest over their most potent and troublesome enemies.

6. Their entire union among themselves, under one king; as you may see in the 37th chapter. The making of that scattered people entirely one, that so divided people, so broken from themselves, Israel and Judah one stick in God's own hand. And,

7. God's owning them visibly as his people, and taking them anew into covenant with himself, having pardoned their iniquities, and cleansed them from all their filthiness and their idols, and so restored the relation between himself and them. Certainly the concurrence of all these things cannot but make a very happy state.

II. That such a state of things is yet future, requires to be somewhat more at large insisted on. And for the evincing of it, it is manifest that such predictions must have a signification in reference unto the people of Israel, according to one understanding or another of that term or name, "the house of Israel." And we can have but these two senses to reflect upon; either that it must mean Jacob's natural seed; or else the church of God in the world in common, his universal church, including and comprehending such of Israel, as have been or at any time shall be called, and brought within the compass of the Christian church. Now take either of these senses of that compellation, and I suppose it capable of being plainly enough evinced, that such a happy state of things hath not been as yet, and therefore is to be looked upon as still future.

1. If you take Israel in the former sense, it is very plain that these prophecies have not been accomplished to the natural seed of Israel. Particularly,

(1.) That people have never been entirely restored to their own land. The prophecy concerning the dry bones that should be made to live, in chap. 37. is expressly said to concern the whole house of Israel, ver. 11. But it is plain, that the whole house of Israel in the literal sense hath not been restored. What became of the ten tribes we do not know. This is a thing about which there is much dissentation; but none that I can tell are able to determine, where or in what part of the world they are. It is true indeed that we find the apostle speaking of the piety of the twelve tribes, Acts 26. 7. Our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come unto the promise of the resurrection. But that can only be understood to mean, either that Salmanazer, when he carried away the ten tribes, left some; and yet it is plain that he left very few, insomuch that the new inhabitants wanted some to instruct them in the manner of the worship of the God of the land; or

that some few might return of the several tribes, here and there one. But that they returned in a body, we have no reason at all to think; and so this prophecy hath not been fulfilled in reference to the main body of the ten tribes, concerning their restitution, and that resurrection that is imported by the enlivening into living men those dry bones.

(2.) That people have never been reunited into one people, the two tribes and the ten. But that is expressly predicted in the prophecy of the two sticks made one, Ephraim or Joseph, and Judah. The prophet is directed to take two sticks, (chap. 37.) emblematically to signify that twofold people, of the ten tribes, and the two tribes, and these sticks are represented to him as made one: and the Lord tells him the signification of the prophecy is this, that he would make these two entirely one people. It is plain, whatever there were of the ten tribes that did return from their captivity, they never came into a union with the two; but they were so much divided from one another, even in the matter of religion, that we see by what is recorded in John 4. that a Samaritan woman made a scruple to give a little water unto one whom she took for a jew, that is, our Saviour himself. And they were so much divided upon other accounts, consequently upon that division in reference to matters of religion, that, as one of the heathen poets says, they would not so much as shew the way to one that was not of their religion; *Non monstrare vias, eadem nisi sacra colenti.*

(3.) There hath been no such signal destruction of their enemies, as is here foretold, in the chapter where the text lies, and the foregoing: those enemies that are spoken of under the name of Gog and Magog. I shall not trouble you with the variety of opinions concerning the proper signification of those names, and the people designed by them; but whosoever can be understood by them, there hath been no such thing accomplished in reference to the house of Israel literally taken, as the prophecy of so great a destruction doth import. Some have thought the successors of Seleucus, expressly and chiefly Antiochus Epiphanes, to be meant; against whom the people of Israel were successful in their wars at some times. But no such destruction, as comes any whit near the terms of this prophecy, can ever be understood to have befallen those enemies. There is not the least shadow nor footstep of such a way of destruction, as is mentioned in chap. 38. That they should be destroyed miraculously, by hailstones, by fire and brimstone, (ver. 22.) that there should be such vast multitudes destroyed, as that the very weapons should serve this people for fuel seven years together, chap. 39. 9, 10. Certainly take Israel in the literal sense, and understand the prediction in a

proportionable sense, there hath been no such thing ever yet done and past.

(4.) There hath been no such city built, and no such temple raised, as will answer the descriptions in these prophecies; as is most apparent, if you look from the 40th chapter onward to the end. Especially, that there should be such waters issuing from the temple, rising from the sanctuary, and carried in a great river, till at last it comes, after so vast a course and tract of running, to fall into the dead sea, and to heal those waters. Take this in the literal sense, and no such thing hath ever been, or, for ought I know, is ever like to be; it is very improbable it should. So little reason there is, either to think there hath been any literal accomplishment of these things, or that the literal sense is that whereunto we are to adhere.

(5.) It is expressly said, that they should all have David to be their king, chap. 37. 24, 25. This cannot be meant literally. It was impossible he should be their king, that was dead so many hundred years before. Nor can we understand the prophecy to have been accomplished in reference to Israel literally taken; for suppose you take David to mean Christ, as it must be taken, sure all Israel are not yet become christians, they are not yet united under Christ. And therefore it is more than evident, that according to the literal sense of Israel, though we should take the things prophesied not strictly in the literal sense, yet they cannot be understood to have had their accomplishment yet.

2. If we go the other way, and take Israel to signify the Christian church, and so not to exclude, but to comprehend Israel in the proper, natural, literal sense, being become christians, so many of them as have been so, or shall be so; so these prophecies have not yet been fulfilled. That is, in reference to the universal church, it will appear, that it hath had no such happy state as these prophecies do amount unto; neither in point of degree, nor in point of duration and permanency.

(1.) They have not had a happy state unto that degree, that is imported in these prophecies, and which even the text itself doth summarily import. There are especially these three things to concur; first, the destruction of their external enemies; secondly, a very peaceful, composed, united state of things among themselves; and thirdly, a very lively, vigorous state of religion. Now a state composed and made up of the concurrence of these three, hath not befallen unto the church of God as yet. There hath been no such destruction of their external enemies, as can be understood to amount to the meaning of what is here predicted concerning that: no

such victory obtained, as this destruction of Gog and Magog doth import: no such, as the success and issue of that famous battle of Armageddon, which some would have to be past; though there is after that, a later destruction of Gog and Magog manifestly spoken of in the 20th of the Revelations. But for such, as would have that famous battle to be already past; that which they pitch upon as most probable, was that great battle between Constantine and Maxentius; the victory of the former over the latter by less than an 100,000 men, against the other opposing him with almost double that number. And it must be acknowledged, that that was a very great victory, and of very great concernment unto the Christian church: but no way at all correspondent, either unto what is foretold concerning the thing itself in these prophecies of Ezekiel; or unto the consequent events upon what is said of the battle of Armageddon, in Rev. 16. 16. There was no such continued peaceful state, that did ensue to the church after that victory. There was indeed a calm and serenity in Constantine's time, mixed with a great deal of internal trouble within the church itself, and which increased upon it more afterwards, and so still unto greater degrees for several centuries of years; as we shall have occasion to take notice more upon another head. There was no such flourishing state of religion that did ensue, answerable to the expression of the text, "I have poured out my Spirit upon them, saith the Lord God." And so there was not a happy state, made up by the conjunction and concurrence of the things which must concur. There was in Constantine's time, and after, much of tranquillity, by the cessation of persecution from without; but there was less of the life and vigour and power of religion. That appeared a great deal more eminently in the suffering state and condition of the church; and prosperity was too hard for religion, much more than adversity had been; as all, that know any thing of the history of those times, know. There hath been no such eminent destruction of the church's enemies; no such internal tranquillity and peace within the church itself; no such lively vigorous flourishing state of religion by the pouring forth of the Spirit; there hath been no such concurrence of these, as to make up that measure and degree of happiness of the church, that is here plainly foretold.

(2.) For the permanency and duration of such a happy state of things, it is apparent, that they fall unspeakably short of making any thing out to that purpose, who would have the things to be past that are here spoken of. It is a duration of a thousand years; that seems referred unto as the measure of that happy state that is here foretold; if you compare these pro-

phecies of Ezekiel with those that seem so very much akin to them in the book of the Revelations, especially the 20th chapter. Even those, that would have these things to be past, do acknowledge these prophecies to refer unto one time and one state, unto one sort of enemies, and unto the church of God considered under one and the same notion, that is, the Christian church. But the difficulty is very great to assign the beginning, and consequently the period, of such a thousand years.

For my own part, I will not assert any of these following things. Either, *first*, That that thousand years doth precisely and punctually mean such a limited interval of time; however more probable it may seem that it doth so, and though it be confessed to do so by them that would have these things to be past. Nor, *secondly*, That Christ shall personally appear, as some are bold to assert, at the battle of Armageddon; and that he shall personally reign afterwards upon the earth for a thousand years. Nor, *thirdly*, That there will be any resurrection, before that time do commence, of the bodies of departed saints. Nor, *fourthly*, That the happiness of that time shall consist in sensual enjoyments: which was the conceit of Cerinthus and his followers; and which caused the Millenaries to pass under the name of so odious a sect of old, by those who had taken notice of them, Epiphanius, and Austin after him, and others: for they reckoned the felicity of those times should very much consist in a voluptuous life, that persons should have every thing to the full that should be grateful to their sense, all opportunity to indulge appetite, and the like. And least of all, *fifthly*, That in this state of things the saints as such, shall have any power or right given them in the properties of other men; or that there shall be a disturbing and overturning of ranks and orders in civil societies. I do not think, that any of these things are confidently to be asserted; and for the two last, they carry no other face, than of things to be abhorred and detested.

But I conceive that thousand years to intend a very long and considerable interval or tract of time, wherein the state and condition of the church shall be peaceful and serene and happy; but especially (as we shall have occasion more to shew hereafter,) by a large communication of the Holy Ghost, that shall make men have very little mind to this world, and very little seek such a thing as serving secular interests, and pleasing and gratifying their senses and sensual inclinations.

And that this state of things is not yet past. So much, I think, we may with some confidence assert: that is, there is not such a state of things, of such a constitution as that where-

of you have heard, that hath been in any such permanency, as that thousand years, though not strictly taken, yet must rationally be understood to signify. They, that would have such a thousand years to be already past, are in very great difficulties about the commencement of it. Some would have it to begin with the beginning of Constantine's reign, and so to end proportionably from that day to a thousand years strictly; for just so much time. And others would place the beginning of that time a considerable while after; a hundred, or a hundred and forty, or a hundred and fifty years after; that is, from the time of the taking and sacking of Rome by Alaricus and his Goths; or by Gensericus and his Vandals; until which destructions, the latter especially, Rome did continue pagan, though the empire was in Christian hands; and that therefore this thousand years, wherein Satan is said to be bound, began after that paganism was quite extirpated and banished from Rome: and yet those that go that way, still more incline to the former account. If so, certainly such things must be acknowledged to have fallen within the compass of the thousand years, as the limits of them are set among themselves, as we would think very ill to agree with a state of things, wherein Satan should be bound. According to the former account, that persecution by Julian must come within it: it is true indeed that was not of long continuance, nor very bloody; but a *nubecula*, (as Athanasius said of it,) that would soon pass over; yet it was a very manifest prejudice that he did to the Christian interest, by those cunning arts he used in his time; far more prejudice, than had been done it by the bloody persecutions of former times; as may sufficiently appear by a view of the state of things in those days, when it was not so much as permitted the children of christians to be taught any of the learned languages. They were particularly forbidden to be taught the greek: upon which occasion I remember Gregory Nazianzen hath this expression, "But I hope though we may not speak greek, we may be allowed to speak truth; and while we may be allowed to do so, as long as we have tongues, we will never forbear speaking." But it was a great check, that was put upon the interest of Christianity by that means; and very unlikely to be so soon after the commencement of the thousand years. And besides that, all the dreadful persecution of the orthodox by the arians immediately falls in; "who persecuted the orthodox" (as one speaks writing of those times,) "*sævius & durius*, a great deal more harshly, more severely, more horridly, than ever the pagans had done before them; when even all the world was against Athanasius, and he alone was forced to sustain the brunt of the whole world:" very

unlike to a time, wherein the devil was bound! And then falls in with the same time that strange and portentous growth of the Mahometan religion; and was that too, while Satan was bound? And in the Christian church, the greatest tyranny among the church-governors, the greatest stupidity for several centuries of years among the priests and clergy, the greatest viciousness and debauchery among the generality of the people, that we can possibly tell how to frame an imagination of. Besides, that within the same compass of time must fall out the bloody massacres of the poor Waldenses, about the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries. Certainly, if all this while Satan was bound, we can never think of a time, when he was loose. And therefore, in point of permanency, there hath been no such continuing happy state to the church, as yet past and over, which these predictions do most plainly refer unto. And therefore we have the thing first proposed I conceive in good measure cleared, that there is a state yet to come of very great tranquillity and prosperity to the church of God for some considerable tract of time.

I cannot now stand to apply this according to what it challenges; these two things I shall only for the present hint to you.

1. This being a matter revealed in the word of God, our faith ought to have an exercise upon it. We should believe, that there is such a state of things yet to come, and have affections raised in our hearts proportionable unto such a revelation. It would be unreasonable to say, that we are to be affected with nothing but what is present, and comes under our notice by way of experience, our own experience, contrary to the temper which Abraham discovered, who rejoiced in the foresight of Christ's day, then so very far off. Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad. John 8. 56. We should foresee such a state of things with gladness; our hearts should be comforted upon the apprehension of it. If we can have no enjoyment of future mercies that are designed unto the church of God, how should there have been any enjoyment of past mercies unto them that have lived long after? We find that to have been the temper of the people of God of old, that they have much enjoyed and lived upon ancient mercies, mercies long ago past; as you may see in such memorials, as you have in the 105th, and 106th psalms, and in other places of Scripture. I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. Psal 77. 10. What triumphs and exultations do you oftentimes meet with, in the book of Psalms, upon the account of the destruction of Pharaoh, and his Egyptians, in the red sea, and the conduct of the people

of Israel through the wilderness? Why, if memory will serve to fetch former mercies into our present enjoyment; certainly faith should serve to fetch future mercies unto our present enjoyment too, and give us the taste and relish of them.

2. We should take encouragement hence against the present horrid atheism and wickedness, that doth so affront the interest of religion at this day. We are too much apt to pass our judgment upon things by very undue measures; to judge by the present sight of our own eye, that that is well which we apprehend, or which carries a sensible appearance with it of being well for the present; but to forget, that it is always somewhat future, that must give a determination unto that which is simply best or otherwise; that a judgment is not to pass, till we come to the end of things, till we see what will become of matters in their final issue. There will be a day of distinguishing, even in this world, in point of the external favours of providence, between them that fear the Lord, and them that fear him not. And though now the spirit of atheism be insolent, so as it never was in any age, no not so much in any Pagan nation; and that where the Christian name is professed, even amongst ourselves; do we think therefore that atheists and their religion shall carry the cause? No; if we will but frame to ourselves the prospect, which the word of God gives us an advantage and warrant to do, it would guide our judgments much another way; to think, that that must need be the better side and the better part, which shall be successful and prevailing at last. It is most eligible to be on that side, which shall finally prosper, when God comes to lay claim to us, to challenge our help in bearing a witness to his name and truth and holy ways; "Come, who will take part with me against an ungodly race of men? Who will be religious in this irreligious age? Who fear God, when it is counted matter of reproach, and an argument of a weak and crazy spirit, for men to fear and dread an invisible Being?" It would help your resolution much, would you think in this case, that there will be a time when God shall be visibly owned in the world, and when it shall cease to be a reproachful thing to be a religious man, a fearer of the Lord.

SERMON III*.

WE have spoken already of this proposition,—That there is a state of very great prosperity and tranquillity, for a considerable tract of time, appointed for the church of God on earth.—We have offered several things to assert the truth of it: and made some use of it, to recommend it as a fit object to be entertained by our faith; and that we should take encouragement from it against the prevailing atheism and wickedness of this apostate world, which hath borne so much sway in it through many ages, upon that prospect which this truth gives us, of a time and state of things, wherein it shall cease to be so, wherein religion shall lift up the head, and outface the wickedness of a corrupt and depraved race of men; when this very earth itself, that hath been the stage of God's dishonour through so long a tract of time, shall be the stage of his glory.

But here some may be apt to say;—"To what purpose is all this, when no hope is given us of seeing any such good state of things in our days? If we are not encouraged to expect, with our own eyes to see such a happy state of things; had not we as good take all our comforts and encouragements from the expectation of a judgment-day to come, and an eternal state? What doth it signify to have any representation made to us of a good state of things on earth, which we are told it is likely we shall fare never the better for?"

* Preached May 22, 1678.

This is a thing, that requires to be distinctly discussed; and therefore I shall spend some time upon it.

1. The exception would lie as much against the putting of any of these things into the Bible, till at least immediately before the time when they should be accomplished and fulfilled. And so it is an insufferable reflection upon the divine wisdom, that hath thought fit that such an account of things should be given for so long time previous unto their accomplishment or actual taking place. And,

2. It is no prejudice at all, against our receiving encouragement and having our spirits fortified against the atheism of a wicked world by this prospect, that we may receive such encouragement also by the consideration of a judgment to come and an eternal state. For do not we know, that sundry uses may be made of many doctrines, as one and the same truth may be proved by sundry mediums? What prejudice doth it do an honest cause, if one can produce twenty arguments to prove the same truth, and so all result into one conclusion? We reckon the truth is fortified and confirmed by it so much the more. And if there are sundry truths, if never so great a variety of truths, that all meet as it were in one point, and produce the same good frame and temper in our hearts; is that a prejudice to us? I hope it is so much the more an advantage. But that which I shall mostly insist upon is, that—

3. That same question or inquiry, "To what purpose is it, that we should hear of such things, when there is no hope given us to see them, or that they should be brought about in our time?" This question, I say, there is no serious, considering, well-tempered christian, but is best capable of answering it out of his own heart, He doth but need to consult with his own heart, when he is himself and his right mind, and he will see enough even out of his own spirit, from whence to answer the inquiry, and to say all that needs to be said in reference to it.

To make that out: it is obvious to our notice, that there are two extremes, (and therefore both of them bad enough, as all extremes naturally are,) from whence any such inquiry can be supposed to proceed. A man may say, "To what purpose is it?" either from stupidity and unconcernedness, as thinking they need not concern themselves about any thing that is not likely to fall within the compass of their own time: or from fretfulness, a vexatious, discontentful temper of spirit, upon having a prospect of such things set before them, as they have no encouragement it may be to think they shall see. Now a sound and good temper and complexion of soul hath that in itself, which would obviate and avoid both these extremes, and let us

see sufficient reason for these two things in opposition to them, to wit, *first*, the entertainment of such a truth with due complacency, notwithstanding we have no expectation to see the accomplishment of it in our time; supposing we have no such expectation. And, *secondly*, to admit the delay of that accomplishment with composedness and quietude of mind, so as not to be disturbed in our own spirits with that delay, though such things may not receive a speedy and sudden accomplishment according to our desire. The former of these would enable us to make a due use of such a truth as this; and the latter would keep us from abusing it. By the former, we should be enabled to savour and relish it with complacency, and so as to get good out of it; and by the latter, to avoid the getting of hurt, have our hearts fenced and fortified against any prejudicial impressions thereby. Wherefore these two things I shall labour to make out to you, that there are certain principles in every gracious and well-complexioned soul, that will, *first*, enable it to take complacency in such a truth as this, for the substance of it; and that will, *secondly*, compose, so as not to admit of disturbance by the delay of its accomplishment; even notwithstanding it be supposed that we are never to see it in this world ourselves and with our own eyes.

I. There are such principles as these, that have a tendency to make such a truth savoury to us; notwithstanding it be supposed, that we shall not see it fulfilled in this world ourselves.

1. A principle of self-denial. That will signify a great deal to this purpose. And you well know, there is nothing more deeply radical in the whole frame of practical religion and godliness, than that is. But certainly, if a man be of a self-denying spirit, he will be able to take complacency in somewhat else, than what doth respect his own personal concernments. And is it not a most unsufferable thing, if a man should not? What! would I fancy this great world made for me? and that all the mighty wheels of providence, that roll and are kept in motion from time to time, are all moved with reference to me? to give me a gratification and content according to the wish of my heart? What an insolent thing is so private and selfish a spirit as that?

2. A just concern for posterity would make such a truth savoury. And certainly there is no well-tempered soul destitute of that principle. Grace doth in this, as well as it doth in many other things, graft upon the stock of nature. You know it is natural with men, upon a consciousness of mortality and a desire of immortality, when they find they can live no longer

in their persons, to desire to live in their posterity, those that shall come after them: and it is a great solace that they naturally take in the hope of doing so. Now when grace comes to graft upon this natural stock, would not the spirit of a man be disposed to take a great solace in the hope and expectation, that those that shall come after him shall live in a better state upon religious accounts, than we have done in our days, or may be likely to do? If such a principle as this be not to obtain and take place and have an influence, what would you make of all the promises that were given to Abraham and Isaac and Jacob concerning their seed, so long before the accomplishment of many of them? What can all these promises signify, but upon the supposition of, and in a way of accommodation to, such a principle? You see how savoury and tasteful what God had told David concerning his house and posterity in aftertimes was to him: he was not so stupid, as not to be moved with any thing of that kind; but he is as a person in an ecstacy, a rapture upon it, 2 Sam. 7. 19, 20. "Thou hast spoken concerning thy servant's house for a great while to come; and is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can David say more unto thee?" It was a great solace to good Jacob, old Israel, when he was now even next to death, to think of what should ensue in reference to his posterity and seed, when he was gone. "I die, (saith he,) but God shall be with you," Gen. 48. 21. And do not we think it were a good spirit in ourselves, if we could be of the same mind? Why, though we all die, God shall be with them that succeed! If they shall come into that land, which our eyes shall not behold, what! can we so put off man and christian both together, as to take no complacency in the forethoughts of what good those that may come after may behold and enjoy, though we enjoy it not. It was a high pleasure, that seems to be expressed in the contemplation of the future good of following generations, by the Psalmist, in psal. 102. 18. A people, which shall be created, shall praise the Lord. He was very well pleased to think of that, though it were then a time of very great affliction; as you see the title of that psalm doth import; whether the time present, or the time prophesied and foretold of: for the psalm is a prayer of the afflicted, when he pours out his soul to God, as there you have it. While they are languishing in all that affliction and trouble, which they are supposed then to be under; yet they are pleased to think of a generation to come, a people yet to be born, yet to be created, that shall praise God and rejoice in his great goodness.

3. A loyal and dutiful love unto the blessed God himself, and concern for his interest, tends to make such a truth sa-

voury, though the accomplishment of it we may perhaps never see in this world. Was that heart ever touched with a dutiful sense of his interest, that would not be pleased to think of his being glorified highly, upon the same stage where he has been so insolently affronted and provoked for so long a time? It was an inexpressible pleasure, that seems to have gone with such expressions, as these that we sometimes meet with; "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens, and thy glory above all the earth;" as we find in psalm 108. 5. and in many expressions scattered up and down the Scripture of like import. A truly pious soul would be mightily concerned, that God should at one time or other have the just attribution and revenue of glory paid him, which is to arise out of this part of his creation, this lower, lapsed part. Considering now, how mean and low and wretched a place soever this world is, yet it is a part of the creation of God, and there is a revenue of glory due to him out of it; who would not take complacency in the thoughts of a time, when it shall be gathered up and brought in, when the name of God shall be glorious on the earth, every knee bowing to him, and every tongue confessing to him; that at least it should more generally be so, than it hath hitherto been?

4. A compassionate regard to the souls of men hath still the same tendency to make us relish, with a great deal of pleasure, the forethoughts of such a state; wherein religion, that hath been so much under reproach for so long a tract of time, shall be a creditable thing, lift up the head with honour, and outface insolent atheism and wickedness. If we consider this, as that wherein the souls of men are concerned; it cannot but be highly grateful to us to contemplate such better days to come. For by how manifest experience doth it appear, that such a state of things, wherein religion is a reproach, endangers and ruins multitudes of souls every where? How many are jeered and flouted out of their religion, where there have been only some lighter tinctures of it upon their spirits, or only some half inclinations towards it; while it is reckoned matter of reproach to be a fearer of the great God; when to be a professed devotee unto the Sovereign Majesty of heaven and earth, to avow an awe and dread of invisible powers, is looked upon as an argument of a weak and effeminate mind; and when it goes for pure fanaticism for any to pretend to stand in awe of an invisible Ruler? It is manifest, what multitudes of souls are ensnared unto perdition, even by the shame and reproach and fear of men, that religion hath been assaulted with in many ages, but never more than in our own. And is it not grateful and pleasant, to forethink of such a time and state of things,

after that the prince of the darkness of this world hath been by such variety of arts and methods imposing upon souls to their ruin; to think, I say, of any time, wherein he shall be bound, and the word of God at liberty and run and be glorified, without any kind of let or restraint; wherein effectual endeavours shall every where be set afoot for the rescuing of souls from the common ruin? Surely a just and generous love of mankind, refined and spiritualized as it ought to be in all our hearts, would, even upon that account and by its own natural tendency, make the forethoughts of such a state of things very grateful; and very much commend such a truth to our acceptance and entertainment; notwithstanding the supposition, that we see the accomplishment of no such thing in our time. But we are to shew farther, that,

II. There are principles also in every gracious person, that tend to compose his spirit, so as that it shall not be disquieted by the delay of its accomplishment; and so will by this means prevent such a truth from being abused; or procure, that there shall be no evil and hurtful impressions made upon our spirits by it. For of that there is real danger; that, having the prospect of such a state of things before our eyes, and yet no hope that we shall see the accomplishment of it in our own time, vexation and discontent and secret frettings should be provoked thereby. Therefore we will shew also, that there are principles contained in a right temper and constitution of soul, that will avoid that great extreme, as well as that of a stupid unconcernedness; and compose us unto a due comporting with the delay of the accomplishment of such things whereof we have the prospect in such predictive scriptures. As,

1. A right and well-complexioned faith concerning these things hath a tendency to make us brook the delay of the accomplishment, without any hurtful resentments of it, so as to be discomposed in our spirits thereby. For it is the nature of such a faith to feed upon the substance of things, and not to exercise itself so much about the minuter matters and those that are of mere circumstance. That is rather belonging to the mean principle of sense; which can tell how to converse with nothing but what is present, and appears clothed with all the circumstances of a present event. But faith is not so narrow or confined a principle. It can tell how to converse with objects that are in themselves valuable, so as to unclothe them of present circumstances, and to consider them more abstractly as lying in themselves, and to enjoy the real gain that is in them, without limiting or determining them unto this or that time, or such or such other circumstances that do accompany them in their existence. Faith can tell how, while we are

here upon earth, to fly to heaven for us, and to walk to and fro in the invisible regions, and to fetch us down comforts and consolations from thence. And if it can forage into all eternity, much more may it into a little future time, so as to fetch us what is relieving and comfortable from thence, according to what such futurity doth contain in it for that purpose. Upon this account we have that property of faith, that character of a believer, Isa. 28. 16. "He that believeth, shall not make haste." He that is a serious believer indeed, of the right stamp and kind, will not prematurely catch at things. That faith is not apt to discompose the soul, and put it into a violent and impetuous hurry; but it is its natural effect to compose, to quiet and calm it, to keep it peaceable and sedate, till the events shall be duly seasoned and timed by him who hath all times in his own hand and power. It is very observable, if you consider the substance of that prophecy, which these words of the prophet have a relation to, "I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner-stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth, shall not make haste." One would think, that, upon its being understood what that corner-stone meant, the very hint and intimation of such a thing should put all the powers of a soul, that hath the prospect of it, into a present hasty quick working; and that the matter should not admit of a moment's delay, but be presently done: so great a thing as the laying of that corner-stone! But this is said several hundred years beforehand; and yet "he that believeth shall not make haste." He shall enjoy it now by faith, taste the consolation of it; and have his spirit composed unto a willing and peaceful deference, or referring of the matter how this business should be timed, or when it should be brought about, unto him who is the great Lord and Author and Orderer of all things. As apt a thing as Christ's coming in the flesh was to raise desire, and heighten and stir up mighty affection among them that looked for the consolation of Israel; yet "he that believeth shall not make haste."

2. A truly Christian patience. It is the proper business of this to compose a man's soul. "In your patience possess ye your own souls, Luke 21. 19. The work of patience is to make a man master of his own soul; that it shall be in his power, and he shall enjoy himself: for an impatient man is outed, dispossessed of himself; he hath no command of himself. Now patience hath its exercise for keeping us in the possession of ourselves, not only in bearing the afflictions that lie upon us, but in expecting the good things that lie before us and which we have in prospect and view. Hope that is seen, is not hope:—But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it, Rom. 8. 24, 25. Ye have need of

patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry, Heb. 10, 36, 37. You have need of patience, that you may brook and comport with the delay of his coming, and not count it long. So the apostle James, chap. 5. 7, 8. is pressing to patience in reference to the relief that was to be expected at the coming of our Lord; and he tells those to whom he writes, "The husbandman hath long patience, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient, stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." It is still drawing nearer and nearer. What coming that is, we shall not now dispute; or how near, or how far off. But he gives them to understand, that while he was not as yet come, they had need of patience, to compose their hearts, and to keep them composed and quiet during the time of their expectation.

3. Weariness of sin will do much to this purpose. If once the body of death be really burdensome to us, and we would fain by any means in the world have the power of sin abated; this will tend to compose us unto a willingness, that God should take any course with us, that according to his estimate and account may most aptly serve that end, to break the power of sin. Well, suppose he thinks this a fitter course for us, instead of letting the sun shine upon us, to make the fire burn round about us; suppose he judge it fitter for us to be under strikings and hammerings in order to the working off our dross, and beating us into a better form and figure: then a true and real weariness and impatiency of sin would make us contented to be brought to this temper through any course, so it do but weaken and wear sin, and break the power of it more and more. It would make us contented to endure harsher methods for our time, so it will serve that happy end, and beget in us better frames of spirit. For he, that is a far more competent judge than we are, (we have reason to conclude by the event,) doth judge, that such rougher means and courses are more suitable to our state, to help us to that better pitch and temper of spirit, than a prosperous state of things externally would be; such as is meant here by God's not hiding his face. It may be he doth foresee, that we should not know how to comport with such a state of things, that we should grow vain and foolish, earthly and forgetful of him, and never mind the great concerns of religion, when once trouble and calamity left us. If once we be brought heartily to hate sin, and to reckon that the greatest of all imaginable evils; we should be very well contented, that God should use us with whatsoever severity, so that the power of sin may be abated, and a better temper of spirit promoted.

4. A sense of the demerit of sin, would certainly persuade to much composure of mind in such an expectation. He that considers with himself, "I am less than the least of all mercies, and I have deserved not only to be under the continual harassings of severe providence all my days in this world, but I have deserved hell;" may keep his spirit quiet by that means, though he doth not see a prosperous state of things in this world; especially if he have the apprehension withal of pardoning mercy, and the sweet savour and relish of that. He that would be contented to have undergone any, the greatest agonies and distresses whatsoever, so he might but have had the light of God's countenance shining upon him, so he might but see that those agonies and distresses of spirit did open a way unto a more halcyon season for his Spirit, certainly he would well be content to undergo any severities of dispensations in outward respects, and think all well, if God have pardoned his sin, and let fall all controversy with him. And that belongs to a good temper of spirit too, to apprehend sin either actually pardoned, or at least pardonable; that God is reconcileable, if he comply with his terms. And if I can once savour and relish such a thing as that, I may very well forbear indenting and capitulating with him for such a state of things in this world, that would be pleasing and grateful to me.

5. A subject, governable spirit would contribute very much to keep us composed and quiet under such an expectation and delay: a spirit instructed unto obedience, and that knows how to be under government, and to yield a consent that God should rule. If we can but allow him to bear rule in all the kingdoms of the world, and do what he pleases on earth in his own way and time; if we have our hearts formed unto this, it will certainly make us composed in the expectation of whatever were most grateful to us in this world, or during the delay of bringing such things about for us. We find our Saviour doth with some severity reflect upon his disciples, immediately before his ascension, when they put that curious question to him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" It was an odd notion too, that they had of that kingdom; as appears from other passages. Why says he, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." Acts 1. 6, 7. What! are you for wresting the sceptre out of his hands, and will not you allow him the government of the world? Are you not contented he should rule? Certainly it is a very ill-tempered spirit, that will quarrel at this, that God is above us, that he hath the ordering and timing of all things in his own hand and power. Therefore a subject, governable spirit must needs be in this case a calm,

composed, quiet spirit, unapt to storm and tumultuate, and to admit of any vexatious and unquiet thought, because such things are not done now, or possibly may not be done within our time, that we could wish to see done. You find, that it was indeed a very fervent desire, that Moses had of seeing the land of Canaan. It is worth while to take notice, how he pleads with God upon that account, as he recollects the story himself, Deut. 3. 24. &c. He is relating to the people how he besought the Lord at that time, when the controversy was about that business. "I besought the Lord," says he, "at that time, saying, O Lord God, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand; for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon." But how is he answered? "But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me; and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee, speak no more to me of this matter, I will not be spoken to any more about the matter." And you see afterwards, how contentedly he goes up and dies on this side Jordan. "Go up and die;" and he goes up and dies; there was no more disputing about the business; he was contented to die, and not see that goodly mountain and Lebanon. Certainly that is a very good contentment in such cases, for the Lord to order what he sees meet unto our lot and portion.

6. A serious diligence in present duty. Whoever have not a disposition of heart to mind the duty of their own time, the business that lies in their hand to do; certainly their temper is not good. But every serious christian can find himself so much to do, as to have little leisure to entertain himself unto his prejudice with disquieting thoughts concerning what is yet future, whether of good or evil, within the compass of time and of this present lower world. And if it be observed, I doubt not but common experience will give suffrage to it, that they are most apt to let out their spirits extravagantly to mind the concernments of future time unto anxiety, and so as to busy themselves most about them, who have the least mind to be busy about present duties. You know the looser and more careless and licentious christians, that cannot endure to have their spirits bound and tied down to their work, the work of their present stations, are they that love to be making complaints; Oh! how could I serve God, if I were but in such a time! So liberal are they to him of that which is not in their own power, which is not theirs. It is only the present time is theirs: but they will not serve him with that which they have, the present

day. He that understands his work and business as a christian, that is, to give up himself to prayer, and to a serious watching over his own heart, to the endeavour of preserving a good temper of spirit, or preventing a bad; he that knows, what it is to be intent upon the mortifying of corruption, and the quickening and exercising of one and another grace seasonably, and as occasions do invite and call it forth into exercise; such a one we may truly reckon to be very well composed in his own spirit, in reference to what God does or is doing in his time.

7. Familiarity with death is another thing in the temper of a good soul, that will very much compose to a quiet peaceful frame, during the delay of such things as we wish to see in this world, in reference to the prosperous state of the church of God and the interest of religion. Certainly a man is to be reckoned so much the better christian, by how much the more he is acquainted with the thoughts of dying, and hath made death familiar to himself. Now he that lives conversant about the very brink of the grave, that reckons upon living but a little while here, but is continually expecting his dismission and call into eternity; cannot surely be concerned to any great anxiety of mind, about what shall or shall not come in this world within his time. For such a one would reckon with himself; "Suppose I had never so great assurance, that such and such desirable things shall fall out next year, yet I may die this." No serious person will put death far from him, look upon it as a very distant thing; and therefore such will not be very apt to disquiet themselves with the solicitous expectation of good things on this side, because they will still reckon, death may come between me and that expectation, if it were ever so near.

8 A heavenly frame of spirit will do more than all in this matter. To have the heart much taken up with the thoughts of heaven, and the rest which remains for the people of God, will deliver one from the danger of hurtful impressions by having the prospect of such good things before us in this world, which it may be we shall not live to see. You read of those worthies in Heb. 11. several of whom had been named in the verses before this which I am about to mention, ver. 13. It is said of them, they all died in faith, not having received the promises; but they saw them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. And doing so, they that say such things, ver. 14. declare plainly that they seek a country; that it is the affairs of some other country that their hearts and minds are more upon, and therefore that they are

not so greatly concerned about the good and evil that they may enjoy or suffer in this country: no, they are seeking a country, knowing that their great concerns did not lie much here. And therefore they confidently died in faith, not having received the promise of such and such things that they had the prospect of; merely through the impression and power that a heavenly spirit had with them, to carry them to follow and mind heaven and the great concernments of the eternal world, that everlasting state of things. And (as was hinted before) it is certainly a most intolerable distemper of spirit, and wherein we are by no means to suffer or indulge ourselves, that there should be a disposition in us to be more pleased and take more complacency in the forethoughts of the best state of things imaginable in this world, than in the forethoughts of heaven, that every way perfect state, unexceptionably perfect. He that can be contented to sin on still, that he may have his imagination gratified here in this world, is certainly under a great distemper, to speak the most gently of it. And how unreasonably preposterous is it, that any should prefer that which is but intermediate, before that which is most ultimately final? Still always that which is best is at last; that state of things is the only unexceptionable state, which is unalterable; that state, which is never to give place to another, is the only state that is entirely and completely good; it is fit, that that only should be so. There is no pretence for a desire of change, in reference to a state perfectly good; and whatsoever state is not perfectly good, it is still always reasonable to expect and desire a better.

Now all these things, I doubt not, you must confess at the very first view do belong to a well-tempered spirit. And if so, it must argue a very ill frame, if there should be any such sickly hankerings after the best things that we can imagine in this world, as that we cannot satisfy ourselves, while we have no hope, or no great reason to hope, that we shall see them to fall out within the compass of our time.

SERMON IV.*

I shall add one or two more principles of a Christian spirit to those already mentioned, which cannot but keep our spirits composed in the prospect of a better state of things on earth, though we have little prospect that we shall live to see it.

9. A sincere devotedness to God and to his interest. This will compose, and upon the matter make us indifferent, in what time or state of things we live, so it may serve his interest. We have that notion most clear in our minds, that we were not made for ourselves, nor sent into this world upon our own errand; and it can never be well with us, till the temper of our spirits doth correspond and answer to the true light that shines in us, to our light in this particular thing; so as that we hereupon become sincerely devoted and given up to God, as knowing, that this is our errand in this world, to be to him, and to be used by him for his own purposes and services as he pleases. We well know, it is very reasonable and fit, he should have some or other that should own him even in the worst of times; and why not we? What reason can we assign, why we should be the exempted persons? Why we, rather than others, should not serve him in difficulties and exercises, and endure hard things for him, if he will have it so? Unto

* Preached May 29th, 1678.

a frame and state of sincere devotedness to God such a thought will be very familiar, "I am not my own;" and how strange a power would such a thought, seasonably admitted and well placed, have upon our souls, to have them contempered to this apprehension, "I am none of my own?" Sincere devotedness to God is, first, absolute and entire, so as to leave us no right in ourselves apart from him; secondly, upon conviction, that it is the highest excellency created nature is capable of, to be in pure subserviency to him; thirdly, upon a thorough apprehension, that he is the most competent judge how every one of us may serve him to the best purpose, and to the most advantage to his interest; and thereupon, fourthly, it cannot but be accompanied with the highest complacency and pleasure that we are serving him, though we are wasting ourselves in serving him. It cannot but be a matter of high complacency, to be sacrifices consuming in the very flames, on purpose for his glory and pleasure. While we apprehend he is pleased, it is most agreeable to such a temper of spirit to be highly ourselves pleased too. For what, should his pleasure and ours be divers? And must there be two wills and interests between him and us?

10. A religious prudent fear of misapplying prophecies, or astricting and determining them to this or that point of time, which may not be intended by the Spirit of God. It is certain, there ought to be a religious fear of this, because they are sacred things, and therefore not to be trifled with, or made use of to other purposes than they were meant for; much less to serve mean purposes, to gratify our own curiosity, to please our fancy and imagination. And there ought to be a prudent fear of this, and will be in a well-tempered soul, because of the great hurt and danger that may attend such misapplications.

There are two extremes, that persons are apt to run into in this matter; either to set such foretold events too far off, or to make them too near: and we are prone to run into one or the other of them, according as the cases vary and are opposite. For suppose it to be either a bad state of things that is foretold, or suppose it a time for doing some duty unto which we are disinclined, then we make the time very remote; put far off the evil day, think the time is not come yet of building the house of God, of being intent upon the duty that is incumbent upon us. But if they be halcyon days, and it be a grateful prospect of things that we have before us; then we are as apt to set it too near, and to catch at these good things prematurely, before they be ripe and ready for us, or we for them. And here lies our danger.

I cannot but recommend to you that remarkable piece of

Scripture, in 2 Thes. 2. 1, 2. Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, (or by pretended inspirations, nor by word, nor by letter, as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. You shall hardly meet with a more solemn, earnest obtestation in all the Bible, than this is: that is the thing I reckon it so very remarkable for. "I beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" by what he knew was most dear to them, and the mention whereof would be most taking to their hearts; if you have any kindness for the thoughts of that day, any love for the appearance and coming of our Lord; if ever any such thoughts have been grateful to your hearts: we beseech you by that coming of his, and by your gathering together unto him, that you be not soon shaken in mind, that you do not suffer yourselves to be discomposed by an apprehension, as if the day of Christ were at hand. It may perhaps be thought very strange, why the apostle should lay so mighty a stress upon this matter, to obtest in it so very earnestly. And really I could not but think it exceeding strange, if I could be of the mind, that the coming of Christ here spoken of were only the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and that the man of sin afterwards spoken of were only meant of Simon Magus and his impostures, the feats that he was at that time supposed and believed to do; which certainly could be things of no such extraordinary concernment unto them, that lived so far off as Thessalonica at that time, and much less to the whole Christian church. But if we consider the thing itself, according to the ordinary notion that is wont to obtain concerning this day of our Lord, and the gathering together of all his saints unto him; certainly it was a matter of most extraordinary importance, that it should not be apprehended as at hand. For do but think, what dismal consequences would have ensued, if it should have been so apprehended, as if that blessed state of things were presently to take place, were even at the door. We know what a dreadful apostasy hath come since, hath intervened, and of how long continuance. If this had obtained as a part of the religion of christians, that the day of the Lord was then at hand; why then,—

First. How strangely had the christians of that time been diverted from the proper work and business of their present day? all held at a gaze, and in an amused expectation of the present coming of our Lord!

Secondly. What a strange surprize had the afflictions been to them, that did ensue! When they were in a present expec-

tation of nothing but the glorious appearance of their Lord, to have had things come upon them that were of so directly contrary a nature and import! Instead of that, to be presently thrown into a sea of trouble, or into the flames of suffering, how strange a surprize had it been!

Thirdly. What a despondency of spirit had followed upon their disappointment! How had the Christian hopes every where languished, and their hearts even failed them and died within them! As it was with them not being yet instructed in the constitution and design of Christ's kingdom; whose very hopes did expire, when he expired. "We trusted, that it was he, that should have redeemed Israel."

Fourthly. How had it caused the infidel world to triumph over Christianity! How had it opened their mouths wide! "This was a part of the religion of christians, that their Christ was to come again in that very age; and now even from their own principles, their religion is proved a cheat, a mere imposture."

There is certainly very great danger, and there ought therefore to be a religious and a prudent fear, lest we should misapply prophecies, and determine them unto unintended points of time. It is very agreeable unto a good temper of spirit so to do. And if we do so, that very awe will keep us composed and within the bounds of modesty and good temper.

I therefore shut up what I have to say on the first proposition offered from the text with this caution. That we take heed, lest we fail of giving a due preference unto the Spirit of holiness, or the Spirit of God as he is the Spirit of holiness, above what we give to the spirit of prophecy, as such. In so plain a case I need not industriously to represent to you the inequality of the comparison; and how much the Spirit of holiness, as such, is to be preferred before the spirit of prophecy, as such. That is peculiar unto the children of the Most High, the sons of God, those that are designed for an eternal inheritance: the other, strangers, even a paganish Balaam, may share and partake in, as well as others. And what good would it do us, if we had the foreknowledge of all events through all succeeding time? Most apparent it is, that infinite knowledge doth only agree with infinite power; and therefore that it is fit, that knowledge should be proportionably bounded as power is, kept within as narrow limits. It would not only do us no good, but it would be a most unspeakable prejudice to us, to have the foreknowledge of all events; that that should be the measure and compass of our understanding faculty, to have the knowledge of things future as well as of those that are present. For plain it is, that the good things that we should foreknow, if we

see them certain not to fall out in our own time, and especially if we did foreknow that they would nearly border upon our time; how should we languish in the very sight of them, that we should come so near, and not reach? And for all the evils that we should foresee, we should thereby multiply them, and suffer every affliction a thousand times over; whereas God intends we should suffer it but once. We should bring the trouble of all our days into every day. It was therefore certainly a merciful law, if we would understand it; "Take no thought for to-morrow; sufficient for the day is the evil of it." And I reckon it admirable wisdom, which we are all concerned to adore, that when it was as easy to God to have given us a catalogue of all considerable events unto the end of the world, determined unto certain times when they should fall out, as to give us the ten commandments; he hath done this, and not that. Is was admirable wisdom, which we ought highly to reverence him for, that he hath stated our case so, and doth keep times and seasons so hid in his own hand and power, as he is pleased to do. And for whatsoever satisfaction we are capable of taking, in apprehending the substantial truth of such a thing without bringing it to circumstances, that there is such a good state of things for the church of God in this world, and at one time or other will obtain; whatever just satisfaction we can take in the apprehension of it, I reckon, that if we had that due respect that we should have unto a right temperature of our own minds and hearts, in such particulars as I have mentioned, we should thereby highly enhance that pleasure; as much as the pleasure that a temperate man takes in eating and drinking is greater, than that which a furious and libidinous appetite is capable of taking, in a person to whom his very hunger is a disease. And therefore now I shall leave this proposition, and go on to that other truth that we observed,

That such a good state of things can never be brought about, but by a great effusion of the Spirit of God.

In speaking to this, I shall,—briefly shew what kind of communication of the Spirit this must be: and then—shew the apt and appropriate usefulness of that means unto this end, the bringing about of a good state of things.

1. What kind of communication it must be.

If we speak of it objectively, that is, in respect of the thing communicated; so the communication of the Spirit must intend the influences and operations of the Spirit, and the consequent effects and fruits of it; its χαρισματα; those principally and chiefly that do accompany salvation, which proceed from it as the Spirit of holiness. Though yet we are not to

exclude those ordinary gifts of the Spirit, that are statedly in the church, and subservient to those other. Whether ever any extraordinary gifts shall be renewed, that, because I know nothing of it, I shall affirm nothing in.

If you speak of this communication formally, as to the nature or kind of it in itself considered; so we may understand it to be a very great and plentiful communication, that is here meant. So the very expression in the text of pouring forth doth import; the same word being used sometimes to signify the larger and more remarkable issues of God's wrath, when, as a deluge, and inundation, it breaks forth upon a people and overflows. It signifies (as some critical writers do observe,) both celerity and abundance in the effusion. And the expression having that use, to denote the breakings forth of the wrath and fury of God, and being now applied here to this purpose, it carries such an import with it, as if it had been said; "My wrath was never poured forth so copiously, so abundantly, but that there shall be as large and copious an effusion of my Spirit." I take it, that these two properties must be understood to belong unto this communication; the fulness of it, in reference to each particular soul, or intensively considered; and the universality of it, so as that it shall extend unto vastly many, in comparison of what it hath done: but neither of them to be understood in an absolute sense. And so much being supposed, (as there will be occasion in future inferences from Scripture to let you see,) that the communication will be of this kind, and qualified by such properties; we have a sufficient ground, upon which to go on unto the next head, that is, to shew,

II. The apt and appropriate usefulness of this effusion of the Spirit unto this purpose, to bring about a good state of things for the Christian church. And in doing that, we shall have two things to evince,—The *efficacy* of such an effusion of the Spirit unto this purpose: and—the *necessity* of it. That this means will certainly do the business, and that nothing else can; that there is no other way to bring such a state of things about. Which things need to be insisted on particularly and severally, to obviate two great evils, into which we are very incident; that is,—to distrust such a spiritual means of our good, and of the common good, as this is: and—to let our minds and hearts hanker after some other means and methods, that certainly will never do the business.

There is a very great aptness to *distrust such a means as this*, to entertain very cold thoughts about it. The Spirit! How should the Spirit do such a thing as this? bring about a universal tranquillity and peace, and in all respects a more

prosperous and flourishing state for the church of God in the world? That same expression of the prophet, and the form of it, being considered, that it is expostulatory, "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?" Mic. 2. 7. (So the house of Jacob is expostulated with;) it imports a very great aptitude even in a professing people, to have a great deal of distrust about the Spirit, and the effects to be accomplished and brought about by it. It is a keen and pungent way of speaking to speak expostulatorily, as here. "What! have you learned no better, you house of Jacob, than to think, that the Spirit of the Lord can be straitened? that there can be any limits, and bounds set unto its power and influence;"

There is as great an aptness to *trust in other means*, and let out our hearts to them. An arm of flesh signifies a great deal, when the power of an almighty Spirit is reckoned as nothing. And persons are apt to be very contriving, and prone to forecast, how such and such external forms would do our business, and make the church and the Christian interest hugely prosperous. As great an extravagancy, as if we would suppose, that fine sights would fill a hungry belly, or that gay clothes would cure an ulcerous body; (as I remember that is Plutarch's similitude;) or a diadem cure an aching head, or a fine shoe a gouty foot. It is a very vain thing to think, that any thing that is merely external can reach this end or do this business. For it cannot be done by any other way, by any might or power, but by the Spirit of the living God. And therefore we shall speak distinctly to these two things, the *efficacy*, and *necessity*, of such an effusion of the Spirit unto this purpose.

1. The *efficacy* of it, to bring about a very happy state of things to the Christian church. Do but a little recollect yourselves, what hath been said concerning such a state of things as we might call happy and prosperous. All is capable of being reduced to these two things, first, the more vigorous and lively verdure of religion, that that itself do live and prosper more: and then, secondly, that there go therewith external tranquillity and peace. Now it may easily be apprehended, how an effusion of the Spirit doth *directly* do the former; and we shall afterwards come to shew, how *by that* it doth the latter too.

(1.) There is nothing that is so genuine and natural a product of the effusion of the Spirit, as the *life of religion* in the world. And it may be shewn, how the Spirit may have an influence to this purpose, both *mediately* and *immediately*.

[1.] Mediately; it may have an influence to the promoting of the life and vigour and power of religion, by the intervention of some other things: As,

First. By means of the kings and potentates of the earth. We have had experience, how in all times and ages our own nation hath felt the different influences of the princes, under which we have been. But we are not now to be confined within so narrow bounds; for we are speaking of the state of the church of God in the general. And think how it will be, if such scriptures ever come to have a fuller accomplishment than they have yet had; when in all the parts of the Christian world kings shall be nursing fathers, queens nursing mothers; when the church shall suck the breasts of kings, when the glory of the Gentiles shall by them be brought into it. How much will it make for the prosperity of religion every where in the world when these shall become in all places the proper characters of princes, (as they are the characters of what should be;) that they scatter the wicked with their eyes, that they are just, ruling in the fear of the Lord, and are upon the people, as showers upon the mown grass, and as clear shinings after rain, are men of courage, men fearing God and hating covetousness? Think whether this will not do much to the making of a happy state as to the interest of religion in the world, when they shall universally concur or very generally in the practical acknowledgment, that Christ is King of kings, and Lord of lords, willingly resign as it were their sceptres, or hold them only in a direct and designed subordination and subserviency to him and his sceptre.

Secondly. By and through them, upon whom the work of the gospel is incumbent in the church, the ministers of it. In such a time, when the Spirit shall be poured forth plentifully, sure they shall have their proportionable share. And when such a time as that shall once come, I believe you will hear much other kind of sermons, or they will, who shall live to such a time, than you are wont to do now a days: souls will surely be dealt withal at another kind of rate. It is plain, too sadly plain, there is a great retraction of the Spirit of God even from us: we know not how to speak living sense unto souls, how to get within you: our words die in our mouths, or drop and die between you and us. We even faint, when we speak; long experienced unsuccessfulness makes us despond: we speak not as persons that hope to prevail, that expect to make you serious, heavenly, mindful of God, and to walk more like christians. The methods of alluring and convincing souls, even that some of us have known, are lost from amongst us in a great part. There have been other ways taken, than we can tell how now to fall upon, for the mollifying of the obdurate, and the awakening of the secure, and the convincing and the persuading of the obstinate, and the winning of the dis-

affected. Sure there will be a larger share, that will come even to the part of ministers, when such an effusion of the Spirit shall be, as is here signified: that they shall know how to speak to better purpose, with more compassion and sense, with more seriousness, with more authority and allurement, than we now find we can.

Other ways also we may suppose the Spirit to have mediate influence by others for this purpose. I shall only close this discourse with saying somewhat to an objection that some may be apt to make.

"But to what great purpose is it, may some say, to speak of what the Spirit will do, when it shall be so largely and plentifully poured forth? This we do not doubt, but when the Spirit comes it will do very great matters; (as the Jews' expectation was, 'When Elias cometh, he will restore all things;') but what shall we do in the mean time? and what good will the foreknowledge of this do us now?"

Certainly it will import us not a little even now, to know which way we are to look, what it is that will do our business, and must do it; to be at least delivered from that impertinent trouble of making vain attempts, and of expecting that to be done any other way, which can never be. Our experience shews us, alas! it is not this nor that external frame of things, that can mend our case. Should we not be as bad, as any other men can be to us, if there be not another spirit? Hath not experience shewn it? And to have a disposition to be continually making attempts, wherein we are sure to be disappointed, and can bring about nothing, so that we shall but traffic for the wind; it is but to add mockery to the torment of our disease. It is indeed a part of the disease itself, to have a kind of pruriency, and itch to trying things, that would make our case so much the worse. A prosperous state of things externally, some are ready to imagine, would itself do all. Alas! What an impertinency were that, and how little to the purpose? In all likelihood it would make us ten thousand times worse, than the sharpest sufferings could ever make us, or let us be, according to God's ordinary methods. And to know, that we are to look one way, is certainly a great advantage; that we may hence at least learn not to look a contrary way; that when we hear it is the effusion of this Spirit must do our business, we should not let our spirits run into union with another kind of spirit: as it is with all such, that, when a state of things displeases them, are ready to cry out, "Let fire come down from heaven, and make a present destruction of all." "You know not what spirit you are of," saith our Lord in this case. Is this like the gentle workings of that be-

nign and sweet Spirit that we are told must do our business? And it would be a great advantage to us, if the apprehension of this did so constantly and habitually possess our souls, and sink into our hearts, as to frame all our deportments accordingly; and that this might be understood to be our only avowed expectation and hope. It would deliver the rest of men from fear about us; for certainly no man hath any reason to be afraid of the Spirit of God: that never did any one any hurt. It can never do men any hurt surely to be made better by its operations in so easy a way, and to be brought into so easy a state, as that will be sure to issue in. Hereupon we shall deliver ourselves and the world about us from a great deal of inconvenience, if once this be but understood, and avowed, and seconded by all suitable deportments, that we only expect the Spirit of the blessed God to change the state of things in the world, and to make it better and more favourable unto the religion of serious christians.

SERMON V*.

WE have been treating of the mediate influence of the Spirit in order to the more prosperous and flourishing state of religion in the world: and have shewn what influence it may have unto this purpose, by the magistracy, and by the ministry, being exercised immediately upon them, and so working mediately by them for the promoting of religion amongst others, by those that stand invested with the glory of these great offices. We shall go on to shew what influence it may have,

Thirdly. By means of family order. And it is too obvious unto common observation, how religion hath decayed, and the interest of it declined by the disuse and deficiency of this means; since families have become so much the nurseries of vice and wickedness, that were much more generally the seed-plots of religion.

I doubt not but many of you can remember the time, when in this city family discipline was much another thing than now it is; and the sobriety and diligence and regularity of youth much more than now; and fewer known to miscarry than at this time. And it is too plain a case, that the miscarriage of so many doth owe itself much to this, the neglect and letting down of family government, and the banishing of religion out of families, at least in a very great degree: that there is so

* Preached June 5th, 1678

little calling upon the name of God, so little of family worship, family instruction, family discipline; that there are so few governors of families, of whom it may be said; as concerning Abraham, "I know Abraham:" What will he do? He will command his household, Gen. 18. 19. How few will the state of the case admit that character to be given of in our days! How little care is taken to ground them that are under the charge and inspection of masters of families, in the principles of religion! Do we observe from sabbath to sabbath, that they profit by ordinances? whether they are going forward or backward in the business of religion? And where the fathers of families have, or pretend to have less time, how much might be done by the mothers among the younger children, and the servants of their own sex? And whereas by the superior heads of families want of time is very much pretended, pray, whose is your time, do you reckon? And whose business is it, that you have to do in the world, God's or your own? And if you will say, that the duties of your callings are part of the business that God will have you do; it is but too possible to do God's business as our own; and therefore it is to be considered, whether you do that business as God's or as your own: and suppose it never so much God's, and intended for him; Doth the doing of part excuse the neglect of the rest? And the lesser and much inferior part, the neglect of the more noble and principal parts of your business? Or would you think, that that servant did discharge himself faithfully, to the office or obligations under which he is, who, when you commit to him in a stated course many sorts of business to be done, spends all his time about one, and neglects all the rest, and the main and most important parts of the business you have put into his hands? And I think it might be considered too to good purpose, whether (since there hath been so great a neglect of keeping up order and government and worship in families, and the thing that is at the first challenge replied by every one is lack of time,) the city is grown much richer than it was in those former days, when men could spare more time for such purposes than they do now?

Whatsoever there is of digression in this, I submit it to your own judgment, how needful and seasonable it is, and whether it be pertinent and proper. But I make no doubt, that, whensoever God shall restore religion in the world, and make it again to prosper, and more to prosper, as we hope he will; it will be by this means in very great part. Much will be done towards it, when it shall please God to stir up the hearts of those, that are governors of families, parents and masters, and to set them with effect on their duty in these things; when

they shall be brought more to tender the precious immortal souls under their care, and be filled with a more just zeal against the licentiousness and growing debauchery of the world. I make no doubt, but when it shall be so, this will be found to do a great deal towards the reviving and restoring religion amongst men. There will be a time, when it shall be said severally, and singly concerning the families of Israel, that God is the God of all their families, (as it is in Jer. 31. 1.) and they shall be his people; so as that the relation shall not be only with the bulk and body of the people in gross, but even with particular families. And this, it is said, should be in the latter days, if you look back to the close of the foregoing chapter, chap. 30. 24. In the latter days, ye shall consider it. And at the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people. And it is said, it should be at such a time, as wherein there should be planting of vines upon the mountains of Samaria, (chap. 31. 5.) and when the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim should cry, "Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion, unto the Lord our God," (ver. 6.) when the people of Ephraim, that is, of the other ten tribes that use to go under that name, and those that did belong to Samaria, should go to Zion, as heretofore; a thing which certainly hath not yet been.

Fourthly. By means of the more common and general example of serious and exemplary religion in the professors of it. That is one great means, by which we may suppose the Spirit of God will work much, when it hath made religion to revive and live in some, to make their exemplary walking the means of diffusing religion unto others. Religion is now, as it is exemplified in the walking and practice of the most, a very little alluring thing, very little amiable; it carries little of invitation in it, little by which we may suppose it capable of proselyting the world, and captivating of men generally to the love of it. The mean, low, abject spirit that is discovered by some, and the contentious, jangling and quarrelsome spirit that is discovered by others, carry little of allurement in them to strangers, and signify little to the making of proselytes, and the winning of persons to the love of religion. We have reason to expect that God will work mightily to make religion spread, by a certain aptitude that there shall be in it, when grown more lively and more vigorous, and a brighter shining and more glorious thing in the world, to attract hearts into the good liking of it.

We go on to speak—

[2.] Of its more immediate and direct influence upon the souls themselves to be wrought upon; which was the second head propounded to be spoken to. And so we are to reckon,

that its greater influence, (when there shall be such an effusion of the Spirit, as we have been speaking of,) will shew itself in these two great and noble effects :—In numerous conversions : and,—In the high improvement and growth of those that sincerely embrace religion, their eminent holiness: which, when we consider, will make the matter we were last speaking of more apprehensible to us, what example may do to the speaking of it yet further and further, as things once growing, grow apace; especially such things as are themselves of a very growing and diffusive nature. The Scripture speaks very much in many places to both these purposes.

First. There are many scriptures, that respect the matter of the church's increase by numerous conversions. Which is an increase as to its extent, as the other will be as to its glory. To instance in some few of the scriptures, that speak of the enlargement of the church by numerous conversions. We are told in Isaiah 2. 2, &c. what shall come to pass in the last days. You have these two forms of expression, the latter days, and the last days. The expression of the latter days doth more generally, according to the language of the Jews, intend the times of the Messiah. They divided time into these three great parts, the time or age before the law, the age under the law, and the age (as they called it) of the Messiah. The expression is here the last days, which seems rather to import the latter part of the latter time; as there is still later and later, till it come to the very last. Now "in the last days, the mountain of the Lord's house" (which is spoken by way of allusion to Zion, and the temple that stood upon that mountain) "shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people, and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Such a time as that the world hath not yet known, so as that it should be said generally concerning it, that this great effusion of the Spirit, and such a cessation from hostilities and wars in the world, should be concomitant and conjunct with one another : we have not had hitherto opportunity to observe a coincidency of these two things. To the same purpose is that in the prophecy of Micah, which I mention as being of so near affinity with the

very letter of this text, Mic. 4. 1, 2. "In the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills, and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, &c." The same words as before, with very little variation. And that passage of a great prince's dream, Daniel 2. 34, 35. of "the stone cut out of the mountain without hands, that became a great mountain, and filled the earth;" I can, for my part, neither understand it in so carnal a sense as some do, nor in so limited a sense as others. Certainly it must signify some greater thing, than we have yet seen. And such numerous accessions to the church by the power of the Holy Ghost in converting work, seem plainly intended and pointed out, Isaiah liv. 1. "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate," (of her that was so,) "than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord." There should be a far greater fruitfulness, than in the time of their more formed, stable church state, when they appeared a people in covenant-relation, married to God. This, though spoken directly and immediately of the Jewish church, means in and by them the universal Gospel church, whom that church did in some sort typically represent. "Enlarge the place of thy tent, (so it follows, ver. 2, 3.) and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes: For thou shalt break forth on the right hand, and on the left, and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited." The like is in Isa. lxvi. 6, &c. "A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the Lord that rendereth recompence to his enemies. Before she travailed, she brought forth; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man-child. Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once?" What can this intend, but some such mighty effusion of the Spirit, by which there shall be great collections and gatherings in of souls as it were on a sudden? To the same purpose in Isaiah 60. 5. "Thou shalt see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee," (the islanders or those that inhabit the more maritime places,) "and the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." This is introduced in verse 4. "Lift up thine eyes round about and see: all they gather

themselves together, they come to thee, thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side." And ver. 8. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to the windows?" Gathering in like great flocks of doves, that as a dense opacous cloud darken the air as they fly! Which numerous increase is most emphatically signified by the apt and elegant metaphor used, psalm 110. 3. where it is said the subjects of Christ's kingdom should be multiplied "as dew from the womb of the morning." That is a vast and spacious womb; imagine, how innumerable drops of dew distil out from thence; such shall the multitude of the converts be in the Christian church. That such scriptures have been fulfilling ever since the first dawnings of Christianity, there is no doubt; but the magnificence of the expressions of many of these prophecies, seem yet to be very far from being answered by correspondent effects. The passage in Joel 2. 28. where it is said, that "the Spirit shall be poured forth upon all flesh," we are told, it is true, in Acts 2. 16. that it had its accomplishment: "This is that which was spoken by the prophet," saith Peter, when the people began to wonder at what they saw, upon that strange pouring forth of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. But it is plain, that he did not intend, that the completion of that prophecy was confined to that point of time. For afterwards, in ver. 37. he tells them that were now awakened, and cried, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" that they must "repent and be baptized, and they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." For, saith he, "the promise" (that promise most apparently, that he had reference to before,) "is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." So that all that was intended in that prophecy is not fulfilled, till God hath done calling. And many other scriptures seem to intimate, that there shall be a time of far more general calling, than hath been hitherto; when the receiving and gathering in "of the Jews shall be as life from the dead," as a resurrection from the dead, Rom. 11. 15. And when the fulness of the Gentiles shall come in, ver. 25. The way of speaking implies, that that fulness or plenitude was yet behind, to succeed after the apostle's time; and no such time hath succeeded yet.

Secondly. There are many scriptures also, that speak of the great improvement and growth of christians by the *immediate* work of the Spirit of God. When I say, *immediate*, I do not mean, as if it did work without means; but that by the means it doth itself immediately reach its subject; and therefore, that all the operations of the Spirit, whether in converting or in building up of souls, lie not in the instruments, but strike

through all, so as to reach their subject. But that only on the by. Many scriptures speak of the great improvement of the church in point of holiness; so that it shall increase, not only in extent, but in glory, and in respect of the lustre, loveliness and splendour of religion in it; that it shall become a much more beautiful and attractive thing, according to the representation which it shall have in the profession and conversation of them that sincerely embrace it. Which I suppose to be more especially pointed at in such passages as these. Isaiah lx. 1, 2, 3. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people; but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." This speaks that religion should be so glorious a thing in its own subject, as by that means to be inviting and attractive to those that were without the church; and so doth directly and immediately speak of such an effect, as should be wrought by the Spirit of God upon persons seriously religious themselves, to make them far to excel and outshine the glory of former times and ages. This also is the more peculiar aspect and reference of that prophecy in Mal. 4. 2. "But unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing under his wings." That is, in that day of the Lord spoken of in ver. 1. "Behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea and all that do wickedly shall be stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Here is a prediction of such an operation of the Spirit, as hath the actual fearers of God already for the subject of it; upon them the Sun of righteousness shall arise with reviving cherishing beams, and make them spring and prosper and flourish even as calves of the stall, as it is there expressed. Religion will not then be such a faint, languid, impotent thing, as now it is, that makes men differ very little from other men, makes them but to look and walk and converse as others do.

Thirdly. Other scriptures speak of both these effects together; and so of the increase of the church both ways at once, both in extent and glory. As I reckon all those may be understood to have that import, that speak of the new heavens and the new earth that should be in the latter times: which are only metaphorical expressions; the heaven and the earth being the universe, making up the frame and compages of nature. These expressions are only borrowed, and denote how universal and glorious a change should be in the world; for

these new heavens and that new earth are specified by the same adjunct, wherein dwelleth righteousness, in one of those texts. We have it mentioned twice in the prophecy of Isaiah, that he would create new heavens, and a new earth, chap. 65. 17. chap. 66. 22. And in 2 Pet. 3. 13. that in these there should dwell righteousness. The renovation should consist in this; and both the universality and the intensive perfection of it are signified. The heavens and the earth, that is, the whole frame of things, should be the subject of the alteration; and this alteration should be a renovation, the making of them new, that is, better; as the newness of things is an ordinary Scripture expression of the excellency of them. Now the creation of these must refer to this time of the great restitution: as John speaks, Rev. 21. 1. "I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away;" the former frame of things was all vanished and gone; nothing was like its former self, but all things were made new, as is added ver. 5. a day, wherein there should be as it were a new making of the world. The following texts also speak of that double increase of the church jointly, Isa. 32. 14, 15. A time and state of great desolation is spoken of as preceding, and to be continued. Till when? "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high:" and what then? "The wilderness shall be a fruitful field." There is the taking in of more from the world, extending the territories of the church further, the inclosing of much more of the wilderness than hath hitherto been: "and the fruitful field be counted for a forest:" that, which was before reckoned a fruitful field, be counted to have been but as a forest, in comparison of what it shall be improved to: there is the increase of the church in respect of the liveliness and power of religion among converts. So in chap. 35. 1, 2. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them, and the desart shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon; they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God."

And both these effects, numerous conversions, and the high improvements of converts, are so connatural, so congenerous, do so very well agree with one another, that we may very well suppose them to go together, that the former will be accompanied with the latter. For this great effusion of the Spirit we must understand to be sanative, intended for the healing of a diseased world, and to repair the corrupted forlorn state of things; and therefore must be proportionable to the state of the case, in reference whereto it is to be a means of cure. It

is very apparent, that wickedness, as it is the more diffusive, is always the more malignant. The diffusion and the malignity are wont to accompany one another; just as it is with diseases, the plague and other distempers that are noisome and dangerous; they are always more mortal as they are more contagious and spreading; and so are extensively and intensively worse at the same time. And it must be proportionably so in the means of cure; there must be such a pouring forth of the Spirit, that will answer the exigency of the case in both respects, that there be very numerous conversions, and a great improvement of converts unto higher and more excellent pitches of religion, than have been usually known in former times.

Objection. But here it may be said, that it is very difficult to conceive, how all this should be, considering what the present state and posture of the world is. As if we cast our eyes about us and consider, how it is in vast parts of it yet overrun with paganism, in others with mahometanism, in others with antichristian pollutions and abominations: when we consider, how it is generally sunk in atheism and oblivion of God, drenched in wickedness: and even that part of it that is called Christian, how little it is better than the rest. The great doctrines of the Christian religion, the incarnation, the death, the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, the future judgment, and the eternal states of men, all become even as antiquated things! professedly believed for fashion's sake, because it is not convenient to pretend to be of no religion: but yet all these things lie with the most as ineffectual, insipid, unoperative notions in their minds that do nothing; and notwithstanding which they are and practise, just as they would do, if they believed no such things. When we consider this to be the present state and posture of the world, it is hard to conceive, how such a change as this is should come. And many may be apt to say in reference to this same Παλιγγενεσια, this renovation or regeneration of the church, the restitution of religion, as Nicodemus said concerning the regeneration of a particular person, "How can these things be?"

Answer. Indeed the long continued restraints of the acts of absolute omnipotency make it even to seem but equal to impotency; and men expect as little from the one as from the other. When great and extraordinary things have not been done through a long tract of time, they are no more expected or looked for from the most potent cause, than they are from a most impotent. And therefore, when any great thing is done for the church and interest of God in the world, it comes under this character, things that we looked not for, (Isa. 64. 3.) things that do even surprise and transcend expectation, and

which no man would have thought of. Men are very unapt to entertain the belief and expectation of things, that are so much above the verge and sphere of ordinary observation. We expect to see what we have been wont to see; and men are apt to measure their faith by their eyes for the most part in reference to such things, that that can be done which they have seen done; but are hardly brought to raise their faith and expectation to higher pitches than so.

To make things therefore as conceivable as we can, we shall point out briefly, in what way and by what methods and steps we may suppose so great a change to be brought about by such an effusion of the Spirit. For, as was said, it will not do the business with most, that the Spirit of God can do all this, which will be granted at the very first hearing: but a lively apprehension of these events to be brought about is not ordinarily begotten, but by seeing a way traced out, from point to point, and from step to step, how and by what degrees such a work may be carried on; and then the representation in that way being somewhat more lively, the impression that is made by it on the spirits of men is accordingly more lively. But of this more particularly hereafter.

I shall shut up the present discourse with desiring you to remind and reflect upon the tendency of all this; that our souls may be possessed with a serious apprehension, and thence have a lively hope begotten in them, of such a time and state of things to come, wherein religion shall prosper and flourish in the world, though now it be at so low an ebb. I may say to you, as Paul did to Agrippa, Acts 26. 8. Why should it be thought an incredible thing, that God should raise the dead? why should it be thought an incredible thing, that there should be a resurrection of religion? Thy dead men shall live, and together with my dead body shall they arise. He hath said it, that knows how to make it good; "who is the resurrection and the life," Isa. 26. 19.

And really it would signify much to us, to have our hearts filled with present hope; though we have no hope, (as was formerly supposed, admitting that supposition,) of seeing it with our own eyes in our own days. Such a hope would however not be unaccompanied with a vital joy. "Abraham rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad;" though it was above two thousand years before. Plain it is, there is not a more stupifying, benumbing thing in all the world, than mere despair. To look upon such a sad face and aspect of things through the world, as we have before our eyes; to look upon it despairingly, and with the apprehension that it never will, never can be better; nothing can more stupify and bind

up the powers of our souls, and sink us into a desponding meanness of spirit. But hope is a kind of anticipated enjoyment, and gives a present participation in the expected pleasantness of those days, how long soever they may yet be off from us. By such a lively hope, we have a presentation, a feeling in our own spirits of what is to come, that should even make our hearts rejoice, and our bones to flourish as an herb. Religion shall not be an inglorious thing in the world always: it will not always be ignominious to be serious, to be a fearer of the Lord, to be a designer for heaven and for a blessed eternity. When these things, that common and prevailing custom hath made ridiculous, with their own high reasonableness, shall have custom itself and a common reputation concurring; how will religion at that time lift up its head, when there is such a blessed conjunction? it is strange to think, that so very absurd things, as the neglecting of God, the forgetting of eternity, the disregarding of men's souls and everlasting concernments, should even be justified by custom, so that nobody is ashamed of them, because they do but as other men do in these things: to be immersed all their life time in the world, to mind nothing else but earthly business, as if they were made all of earth, and only for earth; such most absurd things even seem to be justified by common practice; men are not ashamed of them, because they are but like their neighbours. But when persons shall agree with one another in being serious, heavenly, avowing the fear of God, in express devotedness and subjection to him; when the concurrence of common practice shall be taken in with the high reasonableness of the things themselves, how magnificently will religion look in that day! And if we would but labour so to represent the matter to ourselves beforehand; by a lively hope of such a state of things we should have the anticipated enjoyment of the felicity of those times; and have a great deal of reason, though it may be we are to suffer hard and grievous things in the mean while, to compose ourselves, and to enter upon that state of suffering very cheerfully; to wait patiently and pray earnestly, that of so great a harvest of spiritual blessings to come upon the world in future time, we may have some first-fruits in the mean time. As it is not unusual, when some very great and general shower is ready to fall, some precious scattering drops light here and there as fore-runners.

And we should encourage ourselves in the expectation of a present portion, sufficient for our present turn and the exigency of our own case; for we have this comfortable consideration before us, that there is always so much of the Spirit to be had, that will serve the necessities of every christian that seriously

seeks it. He will give his Spirit to his children that ask him, as readily surely as they that are evil will give good gifts to theirs. At all times there is so much of the Spirit to be had, as, though it will not mend the world, will mend us; if it will not better the external state of things, it will better our spirits; and so, if not keep off suffering, yet will prepare and qualify us for it; and that sure is a greater thing, than to have suffering kept off; for that is but an external and natural evil, this internal and spiritual. It would be a great thing, if persons would admit the conviction of this, (and there is not a plainer thing in all the world,) that patience is better than immunity from suffering: that great and noble effect of the Spirit of God upon the soul, whereby it is brought into an entire possession of itself! Is that to be compared with a little advantage that only my flesh and outward man is capable of? Good things are to be estimated by the greatness and nobleness of their subjects. Sure a good of the mind, of the soul, must needs be far better than that which is only a good of the body, of this perishing external frame; and therefore for us, it is as great a thing as we can reasonably wish, that we may have such a portion of the Spirit imparted to us, that will qualify us to pass well and comfortably through any time. And have not we reason to expect this, even upon what is foretold us concerning what shall be done in the world hereafter? May not I look up with a great deal of hope and encouragement, and say, "Lord, that Spirit of thine that shall one day so flow down upon the world, may not I have some portion of it to answer my present necessities? and that Spirit, that can new make the world, that can create new heavens and a new earth, cannot that new make one poor soul? cannot it better one poor heart?" To have a new heart and a right spirit created and renewed in us, is better to us, than all the world: and we have no reason to look up diffidently and with despondency, but with hearts full of expectation. He will give his Spirit to them that ask him.

SERMON VI.*

WE have told you, wherein a good state for the church would consist, to wit, in these two things concurring,—the flourishing of religion, and—outward peace.—I have said, *concurring;* for if they should be so severed, as that external prosperity should go unaccompanied with much of the power and life of religion, the case would be much worse with the church of God, rather than better. So true the observation is, that religion brought forth riches, and then the daughter destroyed the mother. We must say in this case somewhat like what they have been wont to say, who would give a favourable representation of Epicurus, and his doctrine concerning the matter of felicity, that would make his notion of it to consist of satisfaction of mind and indolency of the body. There must be a like concurrence of two such things to make up an entire and completely happy state to the church; principally a prosperous state of religion, and then (that which would be very much adjumental and accessory,) a peaceful and sedate external state of things.

This being supposed, and having told you what sort of communication of the Spirit is to be expected, we came to shew the apt and appropriate usefulness of the means to the end.

* Preached June 12, 1678.

For the clearing of this, we proposed to speak—of the *efficacy*, and,—of the *necessity* of this mean or cause to bring about the end.

We are yet upon the former of these heads, the *efficacy* of this effusion of the Spirit to work a very happy state of things in the church of God. We have shewn, what it is easily supposable the Spirit may do towards this purpose, both by way of mediate and of immediate influence; both in producing numerous conversions, and then high improvements of converts: and in reference to both have mentioned many scriptures, and might many more, to let you see, what we are taught and encouraged to expect.

We would now use some endeavour, for the facilitating of our belief concerning this matter, and to render it more easily apprehensible and familiar to our own thoughts; that it might not be looked upon as an impossible thing, or as altogether unlikely and improbable to be brought to pass. To this purpose let us consider,—what hath been done in like kind heretofore:—in what way such a thing may be supposed to be brought about; by what steps, and in what method, and by the conspiracy and consent of what subordinate causes such a thing may be effected: and—how suitable and congruous every way it is to the blessed God to do such a thing.

First. We may a little help ourselves in this matter, by taking an estimate from what hath been, unto what may be. Much hath been done in the like kind heretofore. You know, how it was with the Christian church in its beginnings, in its very *primordia*, when the light of the gospel was but dawning upon the world. How great and unexpected were the changes, that were brought about then all on a sudden! Partly in our Lord's time; and more especially, when the Spirit was more eminently poured forth afterwards in the apostles' days! Insomuch that you find the matter represented by such expressions as these, concerning Christ himself in his own time; "Behold, the whole world is gone after him," John. 12. 19. So the anxious and vexed minds of the rulers amongst the people did suggest to them; "We have lost all, the whole world will be his proselytes at this rate." But especially when the Spirit came to be poured forth after his resurrection and ascension; by that same means, "not by might nor by power, but by Spirit," what strange things were done? and who would have expected such things to have been done then, that had lived at that time; if it should have been foretold, that twelve men should convert so great a part of the world? and with what amused, diffident spirits did they receive their own commissions

and instructions, when that strange thing was said to them, "Go you, and teach all nations?" Suppose twelve persons should be picked out from among us, and such a charge given them, "Go and proselyte the world unto serious religion!" Yet we know what was done. It is said in one place, Acts 19. 26. This Paul hath turned away much people; this one man: and in another, Acts 17. 6. Those that have turned the world upside down, are come hither also. Thousands were converted at a sermon, the sound of the gospel flying to the utmost ends of the earth. And this was but in pursuance of what Christ foretold should be done by his Spirit. These men did not levy armies to carry religion abroad into the world. When their hearts seemed to fail and sink within them, as despairing from the greatness of the enterprize, and the meanness of such agents as themselves were; they were only directed to stay and wait awhile, till they should receive power from on high. Acts 1. 4, 8. And when at last it came, with what wonders did these men fill the world! Christ told them therefore, John 17. 7, &c. It is expedient for you, that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you: and when he is come, he will convince the world. We read it, "the Comforter." The word signifies, (and it would be more fitly unto that purpose read,) the advocate, or the pleader; so παρακλητος more properly imports. "When that mighty Pleader comes; my Agent, that I intend shall negotiate my affairs for me (when I am gone,) against an infidel world; then let him alone, he shall deal with the world, as infidel and wicked as it is. 'He shall convince of sin, and righteousness, and judgment.' Whereas I have been reproached as a blasphemer, and a deceiver of the people, and one that hath designed only to set up for myself, and to acquire a name and reputation among men: he shall urge on my behalf the sin of the world in not believing in me; and my righteousness, both personal and imputable, capable of being applied unto others; and he shall urge efficaciously the business of judgment upon the usurping prince of this world, and dethrone him, and cast him down." And so it did succeed in very great part.

And how lively and vigorous was the religion of the primitive christians at that time, those first owners and professors of the Christian faith! how did heavenliness, spirituality, and the life and power that was from above, sparkle in their profession and conversation! That one might see them walking like so many pieces of immortality, dropped down from heaven, and tending thitherward; all full of God, and full of Christ, and full of heaven, and full of glory: and this world was no-

thing to them; trampled upon as a despicable, contemptible thing.

Now we may say with ourselves, *Quicquid fieri potuit, potest: that which could have been done, and we see was done, may still be done.* "Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened? Is his arm shortened?"

Secondly. It would very much facilitate the belief of such a thing, at least the apprehension of it as very possible, to consider, in what easy and apt ways, and by how fit and suitable a method, such a work as this may be carried on. And it will be, I reckon, to good purpose to insist a little here: for when the workings of any extraordinary divine power have been long withheld and restrained, (as was said,) the thoughts and apprehensions of such a thing is very much vanished out of the minds of men; and they expect generally as little from absolute omnipotency as from mere impotency, because their eye-sight is usually the measure of their expectation. Therefore the more easy steps we may suppose to be taken in such a work, so much the more apprehensible the thing will be, and so much the more vivid the apprehension, and the deeper the impression upon our hearts; which is the great thing we should aim at in the hearing of any gospel-truth or doctrine whatsoever.

Now it must be acknowledged, that a very great and extraordinary exertion of divine power, the power of the blessed Spirit, is necessary in this case. Such an extraordinary effort of absolute omnipotency there was at first to create the world: but when once it was created, there was a settlement of a certain law or course of nature, and a stating of all second causes in their proper stations and subordinations, in which the affairs of the world have ever since been carried on in an equal and very little varied course; which hath given atheists occasion to cavil, "All things are as they were from the beginning, even unto this day." This may assist us to apprehend, how things being once by so wonderful a hand put well onwards towards a good state, the course may be continued, and the great interest of religion improved more and more. Suppose it be somewhat proportionably in this new creation, the making new heavens and a new earth, as it was in the making of the world at first. There must once be an extraordinary effort of omnipotency or an almighty power: but that being once supposed, it is easily apprehensible, how many things may concur and fall in, what a conspiracy of inferior and subservient causes there may be, to promote and help on the reviving of religion in the world. That extraordinary effusion of the Spirit therefore once supposed, we will go on to particulars that will be

easily supposable to succeed, and to be subservient and ministering causes in this work.

There will, *first*, be a great observation, no doubt, of whatsoever shall be at first done in this kind, for the recovery of religion in the world. It is a matter that will naturally draw observation. The course, wherein the interest and kingdom of God is ordinarily promoted in the world, is rather governed by that maxim; The kingdom of God cometh not with observation, Luke 17. 20. The affairs of it are carried on in a more still and calm and silent way. But when God does (as we must suppose him to do,) step out of his course in this case; no doubt that first effect, or the Spirit of God, when it comes to shake the spirits of men somewhat generally, and makes them bestir themselves; this cannot but be a very noted thing. If any considerable number in one such city as this should all on a sudden be struck, and a remarkable change be made upon them; if several notoriously debauched and dissolute persons should become very serious, sober, praying men; some noted to be very great worldlings, that one could never hear any thing from but what savoured of earth or an earthly design, now become eminently godly, spiritual, heavenly in all their conversation: this would be very much observed and taken notice of, as somewhat a strange and new thing. And,

Upon such observation, *secondly*, the minds of men will be filled with wonder, and much amusement. "What a strange thing is this, that such a great number of people will not be as they have been, and do as they have done! Such as could drink and swear and rant with the rest of their dissolute neighbours, are now taken up all of a sudden, and do no such thing! We can hear them speaking of God and heaven and eternity, unto whom all thoughts of any such thing seemed perfect strangers!" Men will be very apt to be amused, when such a thing as this shall be.

That amusement and wonder, *thirdly*, will beget discourse about it from person to person. It will grow, as we may easily apprehend, into matter of talk, what changes appear in such and such.

Such discourse, *fourthly*, it is very supposable, may put many persons upon search and inquiry; first into the truth of the matter of fact, and then into the tendency of such a thing, whither it drives, what kind of change it is. Is it true, yea or no, that such things really are? and when once it comes to be found really true, that there are great numbers of persons upon whom there is a very eminent and remarkable turn and change, either to make debauched persons become religious, or such as were before religious to become more visibly serious and lively

and active in the business of religion; when it is found, I say, to be so, the matter itself, which such persons come to be changed to, naturally comes under inquiry: Whither do these persons tend? what do these impressions, that are now upon their minds, put them upon? and it is found, that they are urged by such impressions to mind God and the Redeemer of souls more, the concernments of eternity and another world; and to help all others to do so too, as much as in them lies. These things do very aptly succeed to one another. And so far the case was like this, in Acts 2. upon that first eminent effusion of the Spirit. The matter came to be noised abroad, (ver. 6.) and the multitude came together. And ver. 7. They were all amazed, and marvelled: very great amusement was upon the minds of men. Though it is true there was somewhat miraculous in the case, that is, the power of speaking variety of languages all of a sudden; and we suspend any judgment for the present, about what we are to expect hereafter in the church of God of the same thing or of any thing of like kind. But to have so much, as is of ordinary and common concernment to souls, wrought and done, as hath been mentioned, somewhat generally; this cannot but infer much observation, much wonder and amusement of mind with others, much discourse and talk upon the subject, and thereupon inquiry both into the truth and tendency of the matter of fact.

Upon such inquiry, *fifthly*, we may suppose there will ensue approbation; that is, at least a judicious approbation, that shall go as far as the judgment and conscience, though it may not suddenly descend upon the heart and affections: we may promise ourselves that, such being the nature of religious concernments, and their high reasonableness so very apparent. What is it that these men drive at? whither do these new impressions on their minds carry them? Why, only to mind the great Lord and Original and Author of all things! to give over living, as the most of men have heretofore done, in a total oblivion and neglect of their own original! How strange is it for men lately come into being, to live in this world and never think; How came we into being? how came there to be such a thing as man on earth? such a world as this? so various orders of creatures in it? All that religion tends to, when it comes to revive in the spirits of men, is but to engage them to look back to their own original, to consider whence they sprang; and what duty they owe there, what reverence and fear and love; and what expectations they may have from that great and eternal and all-comprehending Being, from whom the yand all things did proceed and whereas they find themselves in a lapse and apostacy with the rest of mankind, and have the dis-

covery of a Redeemer; and of God restoring and recovering souls by him; to consider, what trust, what love, what subjection, what entire devotedness is justly claimed as most due and fit to be paid to him. When religion aims at no other things than these; we may promise ourselves, that the inquiry will end in approbation: all this is equal and righteous and good; men can have nothing to say against it. The concernments of religion are of that sort and kind, that they will admit of search and bear an inquiry: and men are only therefore not approvers of religion at least, because they inquire not, and so can understand no reason imaginable why men should pretend to any religion at all. But the same reasons will urge a thousand times more for the greatest and deepest seriousness in religion: for the mere formality of religion, without the substance and soul, is the most absurd and ridiculous thing in all the world, and for which least is to be said. The profession of downright atheism were a great deal more rational, than to pretend to the belief of such a deity that can be pleased with trifles and shadows; than to worship such a thing for a God, that cannot tell whether I love him or no, and fear him or no, and have a heart really propense and devoted to him or no. The inquiry and discussion of the case must be supposed to infer great approbation.

That is likely, *sixthly*, to infer an apprehension of somewhat divine in it. When it shall be seen, that men are strangely wrought upon, and very great changes made upon them; and when being discoursed with, and the things unto which their spirits tend being examined and searched into, they are found to speak words of truth and soberness, and not like mad and distracted men, that are beside themselves; (as the apostles were fain to apologize once and again, when so strange things began to be wrought by their ministry at the first, in Acts 2. 15, 16. and chap. 26. 25.) This must be supposed also very apt and likely to succeed, that there will be an apprehension in the case, that there is something divine in all this; some misgiving or suspicion of it; "Sure it is of God, that there is this change and turn upon the spirits of so many men! Sure there is some divine hand in it!" We find, that there were such apprehensions of somewhat divine in the matter, when so great things were wrought at first by the ministry of the apostles. The most malicious enemies were full of doubt, whereunto this would grow, Acts 5. 24. And one of their wisest men saith, in ver. 39. "If it (this thing) be of God,"—that *if* imports a suspicion, some doubt and apprehension of the thing as not improbable: "Perhaps this is of God, that there are begun such alterations in many men; that those who lived be-

fore as if they were altogether made of earth, now are come to mind nothing but heaven and eternity and the concernments of another world. It is very likely, that there is a divine hand in this matter; for the more we inquire and search, the less we have to say against what these men do; we cannot see but it is highly reasonable, that men should live, as they say we should, in more serious observance of, and devotedness and love to the great Lord of heaven and earth, and the Redeemer of sinners." And,

Hereupon, *seventhly*, succeeds naturally a favourable inclination towards religion, in those who have hitherto been strangers, at least, to the power and life of it. When they see it sparkle in the conversations of others; when they see persons that were become like other men, (for that is the present state of the world, and it is too much to be feared that it will grow more and more so, that those who have been very forward professors of religion fall to decay, and their profession like an old garment grows threadbare, and is worn off from them by piecemeal, and they cease to be what they were; family orders are thrown off, no worship, no calling upon God; they let themselves be ingulfed of the world, as if they were here in the world for nothing else than to drive designs for a few days; eternity and everlasting concernments being quite forgot,) when it shall be said, that men, whatever they were before, are awakening out of this drowsy, dead sleep, and returning from that dreadful apostacy; and a spirit of seriousness and life and vigour, begins to shew itself; and religion and holiness (as I was saying,) shall sparkle in the lives of them, in whose conversation there was hardly the least glimmering of it appearing before: then so amiable and lovely a thing, as well as highly reasonable, religion is, that it will draw favourable inclination; especially when that apprehension goes along, that there is certainly some divine impression upon men's minds, that makes them to bestir themselves and to alter their course from what it was, and that induces so many to do thus as it were at once. For there is a natural reverence of what is apprehended to be divine; this naturally draws a kind of veneration. It was indeed strange, how the world could be imposed upon to believe such figments and fables as they did; but being made to believe them, we see what was the natural operation of that veneration, which resides in the spirits of men, of things apprehended divine. For the image that dropped down from Jupiter; mentioned in Acts 19. 35. it is strange, how the people could be made to believe, that such an image fell down out of heaven: but being made to believe it, nature followed its own course; that is, most highly to reverence what

they apprehended to be of a divine descent, and what came from above. All the city, all that city of Ephesus, was a worshipper of the image that they were told came down from Jupiter. A favourable propension there will be towards religion, when once men come generally to take notice of it as a divine thing; of divine descent, as it is of a divine tendency. And so it was in that first great work of this kind, which we read of in Acts 2. That numerous multitude of converts, three thousand at one sermon, continued in breaking of bread from house to house, and did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, (ver. 46.) Praising God, and having favour with all the people, ver. 47. Religion, when it comes to be itself and to look like itself, will very much attract favour from all that behold the genuine, natural workings and tendencies of it.

Hereupon, *eighthly*, doth unavoidably ensue a general reputation to serious religion, which will signify a great deal to this. When serious religion shall by these means be brought into credit, then the work will drive on apace, and the chariot-wheels move easily. Let us but bethink ourselves, what the reputation even of so despicable a thing as wickedness itself doth in the world; how it spreads, when common practice hath once given it a reputation. Things, that at other times persons would have been ashamed of, or even that they should be suspected concerning them, afterwards they come to glory in: and when once the restraint of shame is gone off from the spirits of men, it is a strange liberty they find to do wickedly; now they can easily go from one wickedness to another, from bad to worse, and still to worse; for the restraint is gone, that bound up their spirits before. When the shame then of being seriously religious shall cease, and it shall become a reputation in the world; think, what that will signify in the case of so highly reasonable and beautiful a thing, as religion in itself is. Common reputation gives a patronage to so horrid, so ignominious a thing as wickedness: what will not so lovely and praiseworthy a thing, as religion is in the very heart and conscience of men that allow themselves to consider it, gain of reputation and by it in such a case; when every man shall be the more esteemed of, by how much the more he appears a sincerely religious man; when no man shall be afraid to avow himself a fearer of the great Lord of heaven and earth, but this shall be reckoned in every one's account a high glory; when every one shall be ready to give suffrage to it, and to say, it is reasonable we should all be so? Then may we suppose religion to be riding on prosperously, conquering and to conquer; then may we expect the arrows of the great Author of it to be sharp in the hearts of men, the way of access will be easy into the in-

wards of men's souls, the great truths and doctrines of religion will come under no prejudice, men will not be shy and ashamed to entertain them, or afraid what the tendency of entertaining them will be, or what course they shall be thereby engaged in, that may possibly prove injurious to them in point of reputation or worldly interest one way or another.

These things being all taken together, it seems we have a pretty apt method, and a representation of fair and easy steps, in which we may suppose such a work to be carried on; when once there is that great effort of the almighty power of the Spirit, to cause somewhat general rousings and awakenings in the spirits of men, to make them a little bestir themselves and look about them, with respect to the concernments of the Maker of this world, and their relation and tendency to another world. And when we see how such a thing may be carried on from step to step, the apprehension of it should not be thrown aside as very remote and alien, and as if it were altogether unlikely that any such thing should ever be done in the world. You know that great inundations, as they gradually spread in circuit, so they increase and grow more copious by a continual accession of new rivulets and springs to them, wherever they spread: so it is in such a work as this of the Spirit of God. That Almighty Spirit, the further it goes, the more it engages and takes in the concurrence of the spirits of men, as so many rivulets into the great and common inundation. For the expression of pouring forth the Spirit seems to favour that metaphor and to look towards it; as the communications of the Spirit are frequently in Scripture spoken of under the same metaphor of streams of water, rivers of water. So it is also in a common conflagration; (the workings of the Spirit are represented by both these elements:) the further the fire spreads, still the more matter it meets with, the more combustible matter; and that way still more and more increases itself, even intensively, according as it spreads more extensively: because it still meets with more fuel to feed upon. We might thus render this business very easy and familiar to our own thoughts, by considering how such a communication of the Spirit once begun and set on foot doth spread and propagate itself, even in an ordinary and easy way and method further and further.

I shall only close at present with one hint, which may point out to us one thing more, as a way to make this apprehension most familiar to us. It would certainly be most clearly apprehensible, how such a work may be wrought, by getting as much of it as is posible exemplified in ourselves, upon our own souls. If once we come to find and feel the Spirit of the liv-

ing God seizing our spirits, coming with an almighty and irresistible power upon us; if we can but feel the fire burn within, and find it refining us, consuming our dross, melting and mollifying us, new moulding us, quickening and enlarging us; it will be very easy to apprehend then, how such a work may be carried on in the world. For if I have but the notion of a unit in my mind, I can soon apprehend a bigger number; it is but adding one unit to that, and another to that, and so on, till I come to a greater number. If I can but find and experience such a mighty operation of that blessed Spirit upon my own soul, it is easy then to conceive thus; if it be so with another, and another, and another, religion will in this way become a very lively prosperous thing in the world. It is but the multiplying of instances, and the thing is done: and he that can do so by me, can do the same by another, and another, and so onwards. And methinks we should not rest ourselves satisfied, till we find somewhat, till we find more of this within ourselves. Oh what a miserable thing is a christian, when he is dead! we look with a great deal of compassion upon the death of any thing; but the case claims so much the more, by how much the life is more noble that is extinct or seems extinct; or when the life once supposed to have been, now appears as if it were quite extinct. Is the expiration of this natural life a thing to be beheld with pity? what is it to lose, or to appear at least deprived of the life of a child of God? to be destitute of such a life, which I have at least pretended to, and carried some appearance and semblance of? The death of a peasant is a considerable thing, and it were barbarous not to take notice of it with a resentment: but when it comes to be talked, A great man is dead, a nobleman, a prince; this makes a great noise and ring in the world; and such a person having been of any use and account in his age, his exit is not without a great lamentation. If I had but a finger dead, it would be an affliction: but if I look into myself, lo, there I behold the death of a soul, a reasonable, intelligent spirit; that ought to live the life of God, devoted to God, in commerce with God: I look into it, and it is dead. Oh! how intolerable a thing should this be to me! till I find some revivings, some stirrings, some indications of life; that is, till I find religion live; that I have somewhat more than an empty, naked, spiritless form of religion; that I can now go and pray, and have life in my prayer; go and hear the word and find life in my hearing. Of all deaths there is none so dreadful and so to be lamented, as that of religion, and certainly most of all in ourselves; that my religion is a dead thing: How impatient should I be, to find it revived! And if I will but be restless

in this, and make it my daily business importunately to supplicate the Father of spirits, "Take pity of thine own offspring, let me not lie languishing still in death; and I at last obtain a merciful audience, (as it is plainly said, that the heart shall live, that seeks God;) then I have such an exemplification in my own soul of the matter we have been discoursing of, as that I can easily represent to myself; "When such a work is done in others, as is done in my own soul, and comes to be made common amongst others; then will religion be a very lively, prosperous, flourishing thing in the world." And that certainly is the best way of all others to make this thing apprehensible to ourselves, to get the thoughts of it familiarized to us, in how easy a way religion should grow and spread among men.

SERMON VII*.

IT was thought requisite to lay before you some considerations, that might facilitate the apprehension and belief of the revival and prosperous state of religion in the world. Three were mentioned to that purpose.

First. The consideration of what hath been done in this kind heretofore, when the Spirit was so eminently poured forth at first.

Secondly. The consideration, by how easy steps and in how apt a method it is supposable, that such a work may be done. These have been spoken of.

If once it please God to say, he will do such and such things, we need not to be told how. "Is any thing too hard for me? saith the Lord." That should be enough for us: but we find, that commonly it is not enough; experience doth too commonly shew that. And therefore the supposition of such a gradual progress, as hath been mentioned, doth much facilitate the apprehension of such a thing: though we do not imply or suppose in all this, that any thing the less power is exerted; but only that it is put forth in a way more familiar to our thoughts. As in the creation of the world there was an exertion even of absolute power, the almightiness (as I may

* Preached June 19th, 1678

speak) of power: but that absolute power soon became ordinate; and that order and chain of causes, and the method of their operations and peculiar virtues, which we are wont to call by the name of nature, universal and particular nature, soon came to be fixed and settled; according whereto God hath since continued the world, and propagated the individuals of every sort and kind of creatures, or propagated the kind in those individuals. This is not to suppose more and less power, but is only a various exertion of the same power. But when power is exerted in this latter way, it is more apprehensible by us, how it goes forth to do such and such things. It is said in Heb. 11. 3. Through faith we understand, that the worlds were framed by the word of God. By faith: how is that? Why, faith is said, in the clause a little before, to be the "evidence of things not seen." We were none of us at the making of the world, we saw not how things were done then; but we have the matter imparted to us by God himself, we have a divine testimony in the case; the history committed into sacred records; by which we are informed, not only that the world was made, but how it was made, by what steps and by how gradual a progression the great God went on in the doing of that stupendous work. And hereupon it is said, "by faith we understand," πίστει νοοῦμεν; that is, as that word signifies, by faith we come to have the formed, explicit notion in our minds, to have distinct thoughts and apprehensions how such a work was done. Thus we learn, how much was done such a day, and how much such a day; light created the first day; the second, the firmament; the third, the earth, dry land, and the seas or the gathering together of the waters into one place; and then herbs and trees and beasts, &c. according to their several kinds; and so on. Now this begets a clearer and more distinct apprehension in our minds of the way of making the world, than if it had been only said, that the world was at first made by God. We understand it by faith, have a notion begot in our minds clear and distinct by faith; inasmuch as, or so far as the testimony is distinct and clear, which we have concerning this matter. Though it is true, reason would go far to demonstrate, that this world had a beginning; yet reasoning could never have helped us to νοεῖν, distinctly to understand, in what steps or in how easy and fit a method that great work was carried on. So now in making the world anew, erecting the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, wherein it shall dwell; we certainly can more distinctly apprehend how that work is done, if it be represented as done by such a kind of gradation as you have heard of, than if we were put to it to conceive it done all at once.

There is no less power required to the continuing of this world as it is, than was to the making of it what it is: for it is the continual exertion of the same power that doth it. But our thoughts are not so liable to be amused, (they are not at all amused,) to see a continual succession of things in the natural way of production. It gives us no difficulty or trouble, to see how children are born, how the kinds of other creatures are propagated: whereas it would greatly amuse us, to think of men and beasts and trees and herbs, all starting up of a sudden out of nothing. Though we cannot, upon a reasonable consideration of the case, but acknowledge, that it were as easy a thing for God to have created man, as he did Adam, by an immediate hand, as it is to continue the race of mankind in that way wherein he doth it; the operation would not be harder to him: yet it was, it seems, in the judgment of his infinite wisdom, less apt; and it would be harder and more unapprehensible unto us. So, we must acknowledge too, that it were no harder a thing for God, "of stones to raise up children unto Abraham," to make christians, proselytes to religion that way, than to convert men by the gospel: but this, which he hath chosen to be his ordinary way, we have reason and obligation to account the fittest way; and it is a way more familiar and easily conceivable to our thoughts. And therefore it doth much towards the facilitating the apprehension and belief of this great change, to consider, by how easy steps and in how apt a method such a work as this may be done. And this will be very considerable unto such persons that take notice, (which any observing man would,) how little apt the wise and holy God is to step out of his usual course, farther than the plain necessity of the case, in reference to such or such great ends of his, doth require. But then add we hereto,

Thirdly. The consideration, how highly suitable it is to the blessed God to do this work. Doth it not look like a godlike work? doth it not carry the aspect of a godlike undertaking and performance, a thing worthy of God, to restore religion and improve it much farther in the world? We shall shew, in what particular respects it is suitable to him.

It is, *first*, very suitable to his most mysterious wisdom: the glory whereof it is to do things, that none could contrive to do besides; and especially to rescue and recover what seemed lost and hopeless, when the sentence of death was as it were actually thereupon, that is, religion. This is the attribute of divine wisdom, to recover things out of so dreadful a degeneracy; to retrieve matters, when the case was so desperate unto all men's apprehensions. It is the choice of divine wisdom to do so, to find an expedient even in the last necessity: accord-

ing to that monumental name, which Abraham put upon the mount, where he was to have sacrificed his son, Jehovah-jireh; the Lord will see, or, the Lord will provide and take care: an instance thought fit to be upon record unto all succeeding time, as a discovery what the choice of the divine wisdom is, that is, to take things even when they are desperate, and to find out an expedient to salve all. An instance like to that I remember Plutarch * takes notice of, that one Metella in a certain great exigence was to have been sacrificed, but was prevented by the miraculous substitution of a heifer in the room of the intended victim: so possibly pagans might have fabulously imitated, what some way or other they came to have heard from the sacred records. But so the case seems to be with religion, when God shall so wonderfully retrieve it; as it was with the heir of the promise, the knife just at the very throat. There was a contrivance suitable to the wisdom of God, to hit upon this critical juncture of time, to rescue him from so near a death, when he seemed even upon expiring. And as he was fetched from death even in a figure; (his father received him from thence in a figure, Heb. 11. 19.) so it must be with religion too. The son of the free-woman, Isaac, was the emblem of it: it is as it were in a like figure to be fetched from death, by a kind of resurrection from the dead; life from the dead, as the apostle speaks; when the time shall be of bringing in the fulness of the Gentiles, and the saving of all Israel. How glorious the display of divine wisdom, to let so gross darkness cover the world, so black and gloomy a day be upon it, that shall issue at last in so much brightness and so glorious light! even in the evening, as it is in Zech. 14. 7. wherein the Lord shall be king over all the earth; and there shall be one Lord, and his name one, ver. 9. Then comes that bright and glorious evening after a black and gloomy day: not perfect darkness; there is not such in the spiritual world, when things are at the worst; as they use to say there is not in the natural world, *non dantur puræ tenebræ*: so it is there said, that the light shall not be clear nor dark, ver. 6. It shall be, as if it were neither day nor night, ver. 7. In that day, (and it shall be one day known to the Lord, neither day nor night,) at evening-time it shall be light. You know how great a change the diurnal return of the sun makes; and were it not that the thing is usual and we are accustomed to it, that would be thought a strange matter. How vast is the change, that, when darkness is upon the spacious hemisphere, all of a sudden the return of the sun should clothe all with so much light

* Plutarchi Parallel. inter Op. Moral. Edit. H. Steph. (Græc.) Vol. I. p. 559.

and lustre and glory, as we see it doth? such vicissitudes the wisdom of God hath thought fit: but especially it hath been reckoned more suitable to his wisdom, to carry things on from obscurer and less considerable beginnings unto perfect and more glorious issues, so that in the evening it shall be light: all the foregoing day did look more like night than day. That we reckon a great work of wisdom, to be able to find out a way of doing the most unexpected things, that no one would have thought of, further than as it may please him to give any previous intimations of his purpose, what he will do.

It is, *secondly*, most suitable to that supreme interest which he hath in this lower world, that propriety and dominion which he claims in it to himself by a most rightful claim; to procure himself a more universal actual acknowledgment and subjection, than hitherto: whether we speak of his natural interest, as he is the God and the Creator of the world; (this lower part, this inferior region is a part of his creation too;) or of his acquired interest by the Redeemer; and I more especially intend the latter. When I consider the magnificent things, that the Scripture speaks concerning the interest of the Redeemer in this world, this lapsed apostate world; (such as this, Mat. 28. 18, 19. All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth: Go ye therefore, and teach all nations; make men know, that they belong to me and are all my right; lay my claim to them, proclaim my right, challenge my interest for me, proselyte them to me; baptize them into my name, with the Father's and the Holy Ghost's;) this doth import, as if some time or other he meant to have a more actual acknowledgment and subjection in this world, than hitherto. If we look upon such a text as that, He died, and revived, and rose again, that he might be Lord both of the living and the dead, Rom. 14. 9. The living and the dead comprehend all that we can think of; and it signifies as much as, that he might be the universal Lord of all. Having paid so dear a price, do we not think, that he will make more of the purchase, than hitherto he hath? as you have it pursued in that 14th to the Romans in several expressions, ver. 7. 9. None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.—For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. That invitation to all the ends of the earth is of as strong import this way, Isa. 45. 22. Look unto me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth. Observe the solemnity and majesty of the following words, ver. 23. I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear. Which say-

ing is expressly applied to the Lord Christ by the apostle in Phil. 2. 11. Consider to the same purpose the solemnity of his inauguration, and the largeness of the grant made to him thereupon, Ps. 2. 6, 7. I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion: I will declare the decree;—Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, This day, that is, the resurrection-day; that is the eminently intended sense, as the apostle's quoting of it in Acts 13. 33. plainly signifies. This day have I begotten thee; thou art now to me the firstborn from the dead, the first-begotten of them that slept: and being my firstborn art a great heir; and this is thy inheritance:—I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession, ver. 8. Sure that signifies more than mere right and title. And think how pursuantly to that it is foretold, Rev. 11. 15. that, upon the sounding of the seventh trumpet, the voice should be, the proclamation should go forth, "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." They are become so; that must needs be in some other way than they could be understood to be so before: they were always so in right and title. It is very suitable to that supreme and sovereign interest that he hath, at one time or another to assert his right; especially considering it as a disputed right: for how long hath this interest been contested about by the usurping God of this world, the prince of the darkness of this world! he who hath tyrannized in the dark, and made it so much his business to keep all men from knowing any other Lord!

It is, *thirdly*, most suitable unto the immense almighty power, by which he is able to subdue all things to himself. It will be upon that account a god-like work, worthy of such an Agent. To make all mountains vanish before Zerubbabel, Zech. 4. 7. to bring about what seemed so very difficult, and even unexpected to all men; this is a thing becoming God, to do what no one else could do. It is the acknowledgment therefore that is given him as God, a glorifying him as God, which we find done by Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. 20. 12. We know not what to do; but our eyes are upon thee. That is as much as to confess, that when all created power is at a nonplus and can do no more, (we can do no more) yet thou hast still somewhat to do, when there is nothing remaining to be done by any hand else. And it is very subsidiary in this case, and helpful to our apprehension and faith, to consider the immensity and omniscience of that Spirit, whereby this great work is to be done; to think that that Spirit is already every where; as in psalm 139. 7. Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? and whither shall I flee from

thy presence? whether I think of heaven or earth, or of any the remotest parts beyond the seas, there thy Spirit is. He doth not need to go far in order to the doing of these great things; but only to exert a present influence, where he is already, having all things subsisting in him, living, moving, and having their beings in him. And when we consider, how great the efficacy is of that great apostate, impure spirit, that in Scripture uses to go under the name of Satan or the devil, to keep the world in darkness and ignorance, to hold them off from God; (the course of the world is said to be after the power of the prince of the air, the spirit that worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience, Eph. 2. 2.) when we think, that his influence should be so diffused and extensive, as that it is thought fit to be said, that the whole world lies εν τω πονερω, which is capable of being read, in the evil one, in the wicked one, (1 John 5. 19.) how should faith triumph in the apprehension of the absolute immensity and omnipresence of the blessed Spirit, by which this great work is to be wrought, and done in the world! when, as we know, Satan cannot be every where, he makes use of many hands, many instruments: but this Spirit, that works all in all immediately itself, how agreeable is it to it to be the author of such a work as this, the reviving of religion out of that dismal death that is so generally upon it in the world!

We cannot but apprehend it, *fourthly*, most suitable to the divine goodness, that boundless, flowing goodness; that, after the prince of darkness, the Apollyon, the destroyer of souls hath been leading still his multitudes down to perdition from age to age, with so little check or restraint, a time should come, when in so visible a way the spoil should be rescued out of the hand of the terrible and the strong; and the Son of God come in for his portion and share, that it was said should be divided to him, Isaiah 53. 12. How like will such a dispensation as this be unto that first joyful sound of the gospel by the ministry of angels, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good-will toward men?" how agreeable to this will that be which we find in Rev. 21. 3. When that voice shall be heard, concerning a thing then actually done and taking place, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them; and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and all tears shall be wiped away;" as it follows, ver. 4. certainly it is very godlike upon this account, that such a thing should be. To reflect upon such passages of Scripture; "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son," &c. "After that the kindness and love of God to man appeared," that φιλανθρωπια,

and the large goodness which such expressions signify; methinks should prevent its being thought strange, that more large correspondent effects of such goodness are expected, before the end of all things shall come.

I must add here by way of caution, that it is true, it is not safe to conclude from what we conceive suitable to God to do, that such a thing shall certainly be done: a stress were not to be laid upon that kind of arguing, if we would suppose that argument to be the original and principal. But having other grounds to rely upon, which you have heard, it is very aptly subsidiary; and signifies very considerably as an addition, to have the apprehension of such a work as every way most suitable to God and worthy of him. And when we find upon other grounds, that is, from what God hath expressly said and foretold, that we have cause to receive and entertain such a truth; we have reason to entertain it with a great deal more complacency, and to solace and satisfy ourselves in it the more, by how much the more we apprehend of suitableness and congruity and fitness in it, and how every way it becomes that great God that is to be the Author of this blessed work. We may venture after him to speak of what is suitable; that is, when he hath told us what he will do, or when we have seen what he doth, then it is fit for us to say this was very worthy of God, fit for him to do; or it will be so, whenever he shall please to do it, if it be what we are yet expecting him from his word to do.

But if it be objected here; If in these several respects it be a thing suitable to God to do such a work as this, why was it not done long ago? inasmuch as this was as good a reason at any other time, as it can be in any time yet to come; since God's wisdom, his sovereign dominion, his power and might, his grace and goodness, were always the same?

To that I shall shortly say,

(i.) That if it be a thing very suitable to God to do, as we have represented, certainly it seems a great deal more likely, and a far more probable way of reasoning, from its not being done, to expect that at some time or other it shall, than that it never shall. But we have told you we rely upon other grounds, and take in that consideration only as subsidiary and adjumental, to facilitate our apprehension and belief of what God hath foretold in his word. But I add,

(ii.) That there are but these two things, that we can have to consider in this matter, and to give an account of; the delaying of such a work so long, and the doing it at last: and I doubt not but a very unexceptionable account may be given of both.

[i.] For the delaying of it so long. Truly we have reason

enough to resolve that into that justice, against which no one that ever considers can open his mouth in this case. Is it to be thought strange, that God should so long withhold his light and influence from a world in so wilful an apostacy and degeneracy and rebellion through so many ages; that hath always taken care to propagate the enmity, and to keep on foot the rebellion, so as that always, when he comes to look down upon the world, this is the prospect that he hath of it, this the account of things; looking down from heaven upon the children of men, he seeth, that there is none that doeth good, none that understand and seek God, psalm 53. 1, 2. Men affect distance from him, they please themselves to be without him in the world. Is it to be thought strange? is it not highly just, that he should make that their long continued doom, which had been their horrid choice? You affect to be without God! Be so, in your own loved darkness and death! Men might see, that things are not well with them, that they are in an unhappy state; it is visible. *Ira Dei est vita mortalis*, is an ancient saying, *this mortal life is the very wrath of God*. Men might apprehend, that God is angry, that they are not such creatures as man was made at first: heathens have apprehended and spoken of the apostacy. But when they are miserable, and feel themselves so, yet they do not return to him, and seek after him: they cannot help themselves, to mend the temper of their own spirits, which they might easily discern is far out of course; yet they do not cry for help. It is highly glorious triumphant justice, to withhold so despised and neglected a presence and influence from so vile and wicked a generation. But then,

[ii.] For doing such a thing at last notwithstanding, good account may be given also Inasmuch as this cannot be said to be a thing, to which justice most strictly and indispensibly and perpetually obliges, but a thing which it doth highly approve; wisdom and sovereignty may most fitly interpose at pleasure, and when it shall be thought fit. God may let his action against the world fall when he will, though he have a most righteous one: and, as the apostle speaks, Rom. 11. 22. concerning this case, the restitution of the Jews, which shall be unto the Gentiles also life from the dead, when all shall be gathered in at once; we are to expect instances, in the mixed course of God's dispensation, both of his severity and goodness: and finally, when that time comes, when all Israel shall be saved, and the fulness of the Gentiles be brought in, the matter is to be resolved into such an exclamation, as that which the apostle makes, (ver. 33.) "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!" It is to be referred

unto his wisdom and sovereignty, to time things as seems good to him. The times and seasons are hid in his own power, Acts 1. 7. Hidden from us, but in his power to state and settle and determine when and as he pleases. What is more agreeable unto so absolute a Sovereign; and so wise a one, than such an arbitrary timing of the dispensation of grace, whenever it shall have its course?

And for our own part; as we have that reason to adore sovereign wisdom and goodness, whenever they shall have their exercise in this kind; so in the mean time we have reason to be silent, and our mouths to be stopped, while God doth as yet defer and delay the time of that pouring forth of his Spirit. We have reason to be silent, if it be our lot in our age to be under the restaints of that blessed Spirit. When was there ever any age in the world, that might more fitly be pitched upon for the object, upon which justice should have its exercise in this kind? was there ever an age, wherein the Spirit was more grieved, more striven against? wherein God should have more cause and reason to say, My Spirit shall not strive with you? with whomsoever of all mortals it strives, it shall not strive with you! To cast our eyes abroad, and consider the state of the world; and to look on the state of things at home:—for the nations about us, we have heard how they have been for years together; what reformations do we hear of? what dispositions to return to God? men cry because of the oppressions of the mighty; but none say, "Where is God our Maker?" every where there is that disposition to groan and languish and die under their pressure; but no inquiries after God: and whereas they cannot turn to him without him, (and we acknowledge that for a principle,) help in order thereto is not implored. We can feel what is externally afflictive; the divine absence we feel not: when his soul is departed from us, we are not concerned to be without the Spirit: as Jer. 6. 8. Lest my soul depart from thee. He speaks of that presence of his as a soul to that people; as it truly and really is to a people professing the name of God: his special presence is the soul of such a people, as they are such a people; holds things together, keeps up and maintains life and order. Be instructed, lest my soul be gone. When his presence and Spirit retire and are withdrawn, it is as discernible in the state of things among a people, as a man can distinguish a carcass from a living man. God is gone, his soul is departed, the soul which he had put into such a people, which was active and at work amongst them. Well! but we are men still for all that, we are reasonable creatures, and have an apprehensive understand-

ing of the word, and faculties remaining to us; so that we might know, that such a presence is gone, and we are miserable thereby; and there might one would think, be some lamentings after the Lord: but where almost are they to be found? if we could have the world at will, enjoy what would gratify sensual inclination, God might be gone and keep away from us, and few would concern themselves with the matter. Have we any thing then to say, that the season is deferred of pouring forth this Spirit? No. If we consider the resistance and grievance and vexation, that it hath met withal in our age and amongst us; it is not strange, if God should determine, "My Spirit shall not strive with you; whatever good thoughts I may have towards those that shall succeed and come up hereafter." But yet notwithstanding, it is most suitable and congruous, that at one time or another so great a work as this, the recovery of religion from under so dismal a darkness and so great a death, should be done. And all these things together serve to evince, that this means hath an efficacy, which we have reason to believe both can and will do this work, so as to make religion to prosper and flourish in the world sooner or later.

SERMON VIII.*

WE have shewn at large the *efficacy* of the means assigned in the text, a plentiful effusion of the Spirit, for bringing about a happy state of things to the Christian church; in one of those two things, that must be supposed to concur in making up such a happy state; namely,

(1.) For the revival of the power of religion. † Without which the other branch, which we are farther to consider, would signify very little to the good state of the church. But this being presupposed, we now procced to shew, how efficacious a means the revival of religion and the prosperous flourishing state of that, by the Spirit poured forth, would be.

(2.) For bringing about an externally happy state of things in the church of God. And it would be so,—By removing the causes of public calamities: and—By working whatsoever doth positively tend unto public good.

[1.] By removing the causes of public calamities: both the deserving, and the working causes.

First. What does deserve public calamities? What so far provokes divine displeasure, as to inflict them, or to let them befal a people. Nothing doth this but sin, that only troubles a people, and causes an unhappy and inprosperous state of

* Preached June 26, 1678. † See page 256.

things, the hiding of God's face, as the text expresses it. It doth as it were cause an ireful aspect in the countenance of providence; makes that otherwise shining, smiling face to be hidden and obscure, and clothes it with terror, that it is not to be beheld. The Lord's hand is not shortened that it cannot save, nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you; in the language of the text, Isaiah 59. 1, 2. So it hath been threatened that it should be, and so in event it hath been, upon any of the more notable apostacies of the church of God. This hath constantly insued, his hiding his face; that is, his altering the course of providence, so as that its aspect hath become ireful and terrible. It is foretold, that so it should be upon such delinquencies. God says to Moses, Deut. 31. 16, &c. Behold, thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, and this people will rise up, and go a whoring after the gods of the strangers of the land, whither they go to be amongst them, and will forsake me, and break my covenant which I have made with them. And what will come of that? Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befal them; so that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us? and the like you have, chap. 32. 18, &c. Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee. And when the Lord saw it, he abhorred them, because of the provoking of his sons and of his daughters. And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be; for they are a very froward generation, &c. Such threatenings you find unto the Christian churches too, in the 2d and 3d chapters of the revelations. There it is threatened to the churches of Ephesus, and Pergamos, and Sardis, and Laodicea; that inasmuch as there were such and such things, wherein they were notoriously delinquent; "If you do not repent, I will remove your candlestick, Rev. 2. 5. If you do not repent, I will fight against you with the sword of my mouth, ver. 16." (That means no doubt the threatenings of the word made, operative, and brought to execution: as in Hos. 6. 5. I have hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth.) "Except thou repent, I will come against thee as a thief, Rev. 3. 3. And, because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.—Be zealous therefore and repent, ver. 16, 19." And thus it hath also in event been, according to the tenour of these threats. If you look over those Psalms, which are the records of the

carriage and deportment of God's own peculiar people towards him, and of his dealing with them thereupon; the 78th, 105th, and 106th; all hath but verified that one thing mentioned in Lev. 26. 23, 24. that when they should walk contrary unto him then would he also walk contrary unto them; that is, he hid his face, as you have heard the import of that expression. And it is with the same cloud that he doth as it were cover his face and them too. He covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, Lam. 2. 1. So he often did that people of the Jews. And so he hath the Christian churches too in great displeasure: those seven in Asia, those in Greece, and in many other parts of the world that have been famous.

What is it now, that must counterwork that wickedness, which provokes God thus to hide his face? we know his Spirit must do it: when he pours out his Spirit, he ceases to hide his face. That is a quick refining fire, purges the dross; without the purging of which the whole lump is called reprobate silver, rejected of the Lord. When the matter was consulted of, the blessed God is represented as it were disputing with himself, whether not to abandon and disinherit his Israel: and when at length the contrary resolution is taken up, what do you find to be the concurrent resolution with that of not casting them off and laying them aside? Jer. 3. 19. I said, how shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? thus the matter is resolved, as in a subserviency to the resolution not to cast them off; Thou shalt call me, my Father, and shalt not turn away from me. "I will put a sonlike disposition into thee, and so the relation shall be continued, and I will not disinherit thee." Thus the thoughts of that severity, of disinheriting and abandoning, came to be laid aside. But the Spirit poured forth removes also.

Secondly. The working causes, as well as the provoking causes of such calamities to the church of God; both without and within itself.

i. Causes *without* the church itself; the injurious violence of open avowed enemies, the atheistical, infidel, idolatrous world; and all reducible to that head, by which the church of God may be endangered. The effusion of the Spirit will remove this cause of public calamities, either,

(i.) By subduing such enemies and breaking their power. And while God is among his people and hath not hid his face, they may venture to defy all the world. Gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces: gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces. Take counsel together, and it shall come to nought; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us, Isa. 8. 9, 10. "Our matters are in a good state: for

we are not deserted and forsaken of the divine presence, our defence and our glory." How is all the enemies power gloried over upon this account in the 66 psalm, and in many like places of Scripture! In that time, when they shall generally fear the Lord from the west, and his glory from the rising of the sun; then it is said, When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him, (Isa. 59. 19.) that is, animate and fill up every part; so as that all that oppose, shall even melt away before him. Or,

(ii.) They shall be overawed, so as thereby to be made to surcease and desist from attempts of hostility against the church. For the church, when religion lives in it, (as you know that is to be the first effect of the Spirit to this purpose,) becomes terrible as an army with banners; as the expression is, Cant. 6. 4. Upon life, order will be sure to insue, and with that goes majesty, and with that terror. There is an awful majesty, you know, sits in the face of a man, while he lives; but if he once become a carcass, the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field, and even the very worms of the earth dare prey upon him. So it is with the church; when it is dead, when religion is become a mere piece of empty, spiritless formality, this makes it look but just like other parts of the world; they will say of it, What are they better than we? The religion of christians, if you look only to the external formalities of it, hath not so much of a superiority or higher excellency, but that it will be a disregarded thing with them who can easily distinguish between vivid religion and dead. But when the Spirit of the living God puts forth itself in discernible effects, and such as carry an awful aspect with them unto the common reason of men; religion then grows a venerable thing, and the very purpose of opposition and hostility is checked and countermanded, and even quite laid aside. Or else,

(iii.) They become kindly affected by this means unto the church; to those that are seriously religious in the world, which we suppose to be, upon so general a pouring forth of the Spirit, a very common thing. Their hearts incline to favour, as we have noted upon another occasion before, that it is apt to be. When there are manifest appearances of God in the restoring of religion, it appears that the thing is of the Lord, the hand of heaven is seen in it. When it was very remarkably so among the first converts, it is said, they had favour with all the people, Acts 2. 47. Upon those manifest appearances of God on behalf of the Israelites under the Egyptian oppression, the Egyptians at length came to favour them. The Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, (Exod. 11. 3.) for they manifestly saw, that God was for them. So natural a

respect, from somewhat of a remaining congenerousness, the manifest appearance of any thing divine did of old draw from the reasonable nature of man! Yea,

(iv.) They become sincerely proselyted very generally: that is to be supposed from the many scriptures formerly opened. And so the causes of offence and disturbance to the church from without very much cease, from the vast extension and spreading of its territories: they that were enemies to true christians on every side, become such even of themselves. That transforming power and influence, which religion and the Spirit of God poured forth will have upon the generality of the spirits of men, is the thing designedly held forth by such expressions as these, Isaiah 11. 6, &c. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed, their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. It is subjoined to all this, (ver. 9.) They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Religion shall so diffuse itself, and the Spirit of God go forth with that transforming power, as to turn leopards and lions and beasts of prey into lambs, to make men of ravenous dispositions to become sincere christians: according to the influence and power of the Spirit of Christ, the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters do the sea, and so there shall be no hurting nor destroying in all the holy mountain of the Lord. My design, as hath been often intimated, is more to shew the connexion of these things with one another, than to define the circumstances of the state itself, and when it shall be. In the same manner I conceive the expression is to be understood in psalm 45. 5. where, speaking of the prosperous state and progress of the kingdom of Christ, its great improvements, when he shall go on prosperously, conquering and to conquer, he saith; "Thy arrow shall be sharp in the hearts of enemies, whereby the people shall fall under thee. Thy arrow shall be directed even into their very hearts, and so they shall become subject unto thy rule by means of the impressions made upon their hearts."

ii. Causes of trouble and calamity, *within* the church itself, will by the same means be made to cease too.

We are told, what those causes are by the apostle James, chap. 4. 1. From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts? Indeed this is the

same cause that was before mentioned, but considered as disquieting and troubling the church of God in the world in another way of operation. The wickedness of the world may be considered, either with reference to the object of it, the great and blessed God, against whom all sin of whatsoever kind is ultimately directed; or with reference to the general subject of it, the world itself which lies in wickedness. According to the former notion of it, as it works in direct reference to God, it is the moral cause of calamities; it provokes God to inflict them, as hath been shewn. But beside that, it is to be considered in the other notion, in reference to the subject: and so it hath an immediate malignant efficiency of its own, to work public calamities.

Plain it is, that the covetousness, the pride, the wrathfulness, the envy, the malice, that every where so much abound in the Christian church, are the source of its wars, the things that disquiet it, and will not let it rest: and (which involves them all,) self-love; a radical evil, from whence spring all the other, and consequently all the miseries, that do or at any time have infested the church of God in this world. It is the observation of a pagan, that a people's self-love is (as he calls it,) the cause of all sins; that too earnest love that every one unduly bears to himself. And the apostle Paul, speaking of the perilous times that should be in the latter age of the world or the last times, (meaning by that phrase the latter part of the age from the Messiah to the end of the world, according to the known division of time into three ages by the Jews;) signifies that the perilousness of those times should then principally appear, when there should be a more notorious discovery of that great principle of self-love every where in the world. Indeed that hath been a principle ruling the world, ever since the breaking off of man from God. Yet we know there are some times of more prevailing wickedness in the world, than others are: and this is the character of those perilous times of the last age, that men should be lovers of their own selves, φιλαυτοι, 2 Tim. 3. 1, 2. Or, as the apostle Peter, speaking of the same latter times, expresses it, 2 Pet. 2. 10. Men shall be αυθαδεις. self-pleasers.

It is very obvious how all the other particular evils spring from this one root. What is pride but an overweening conceit of a man's self? too much complacency in, and admiration of one's self. What is covetousness, but a labouring to grasp all to one's self? Envy rises, because I see others have the good things which I would fain have myself. When it fares better with a man than it doth with others, then he is proud; when it fares better with others than it does with him, then he is envious. When he is proud upon the former account, that sub-

dues him to the dominion of such other evils, as have most affinity with that; it makes him wrathful, malicious, revengeful, and the like. All these miseries, in respect whereof the last days are said to be perilous, are by the apostles in the forementioned places referred unto self-love, self-pleasing, as the proper diagnostics and characters of such a state of the world. But what kind of self-love is it? or what kind of self is it the love of? It is our most ignoble, meanest self, the basest part of ourselves; the body, the sensitive life, and the good things that are suitable and subservient to that. This self is the great idol set up all the world over, and the undue love of it is the idolatry by which that idol is served: terrene and earthly good, in the several kinds and sorts of it, are the several sorts of sacrifices, by which that idol is from time to time provided for. This being the true state of the case, as wickedness doth more prevail and abound, there is still the higher contestation between idol and idol: so many men, so many idols; and so many altars set up for each several idol. And this makes all the hurry and commotion in each part and corner, every man labouring to grasp as much as he can to the service of his own idol, his own private and particular interest. This hath drawn that inundation of miseries upon the church of God; the wickedness of men hath thus broke out like a flood. The floods of ungodly men, acted by such principles, and by that one principle as radical to all the rest, have overwhelmed the world and the church with miseries.

And where is the cure? Only the Spirit of the Lord lifting up a standard against these floods; and that by turning men from trangression in Zion, Isa. lix. 19. 20. by counterworking that wickedness, that hath prevailed so far and to so high a degree. The Spirit of the living God only can purge and compose at once the troubled state of things. Wickedness can never admit any such thing as quiet. The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked, Isa. 57. 20, 21. They can neither admit it themselves, nor permit it to others. Now here the great purifier must be the Spirit poured forth; spoken of under the metaphorical expressions of a refiner's fire, and of fuller's soap, Mal. 3. 2. That is a quick and fervent fire, and will certainly make away with the dross and wickedness, when once it comes to pour forth its mighty and fervent influences to that blessed purpose; even though there should be a state of things, as is forctold in Zech. 13. 8, 9. when two *third* parts of the land should be cut off and die, and only a third be left: that shall be refined, as silver is refined; and tried, as gold, is tried. It is but

one and the same labour, that gives purity and peace. The same thing that defiles, disturbs: and the same thing that purges, pacifies, and brings all to a quiet state and happy composure. So the Spirit poured forth will be a most efficacious means to bring about a good state, by removing the causes of public miseries. And also,

[2.] By working whatsoever hath a positive tendency to the good and happiness of the church. To evidence this, I shall speak, first, of the *principles*, which it doth implant. And, secondly, of the *effects*, which it works by those implanted principles, tending to the common prosperity of the whole church.

i. The principles, which it doth implant. We may comprehend them all summarily under the name of the divine image, which it is the great business of the Spirit to restore among men. And I shall particularize no lower than to these two heads,—divine light, and—love; which the Spirit of God poured forth settles and plants in the minds of men. These are the two great things, wherein men are capable of imitating God. By one of the pen-men of holy writ, the apostle St. John, in one and the same epistle, God is said to be both light and love. God is light, 1 John 1. 5. God is love, chap. 4. 16. These made somewhat generally to obtain amongst men, cannot but infer a most happy state.

(i.) Light. When this is diffused, when the knowledge of God comes to cover the earth, (as was said,) as the waters do the sea, it cannot but make a happy peaceful state. There is nothing terrible in light. "A sphere of light (as I remember a heathen speaks,) hath nothing in it that can be disquietive; and therefore therein can be nothing but perfect tranquillity." Where-ever men are quarrelling with one another, they are quarrelling in the dark, scuffling and fighting with one another in the dark; though every man thinks he sees, which makes the matter so much the worse. It is a real, but an unimagined, unapprehended darkness, that overspreads the world; and in that darkness men are working all the mischiefs and miseries to themselves that can be thought of. There will be an end to that, when the divine light comes and spreads itself (as it were) in men's lives.

(ii.) Love. When God implants his love in the minds of men, there needs no more. Even that one thing is enough to make a happy world, the love of God dwelling in every breast, transforming them into love. He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him, 1 John 4. 16. A most certain assurance, that all will be well. And I would speak of these three branches of divine love, (for it is all divine in respect of

the root and principle,) as conducing to make the world happy: supreme love to God; a due and well regulated love of every man to himself; and love to every other man as to himself. But of these hereafter.

I shall now close with a short word of *Use*. By the drift and tenour of what hath been hitherto discoursed, you may see, that the good and felicity of every person, and so of the church in common, though it come at last in the issue to be an external thing, yet in the root and principle is an internal thing. Every man's happiness or misery grows within himself; and so the common happiness and misery of the church of God grow principally and chiefly within itself. It is the saying of a heathen, Epictetus I mean, "The character or note of an idiot or plebeian is this, that he places the expectation of all his good or of all his evil from without; whereas the note, the certain character of a philosopher, (of a wise or virtuous man, so he means by that term,) is to place all his expectation of good or evil in things that are within himself." It were well if we could but learn this document from a heathen; and learn it well, so as to have the sense of it deeply infixed in our minds and hearts: that hearing of these several causes that work the calamities and troubles of the church of God, we would consider, that, according to our participation in any such calamities, these evils in ourselves do contribute a great deal more to them than the evils in any other men. Let us be convinced of this. Do but apprehend, that if the ambition, or pride, or covetousness, or malice of another man may hurt me, these things within myself do hurt me much more; and there is some spice or other of them in each of our natures. Why should not we be convinced of so plain a thing; is not a dart in my own breast worse than in an enemy's hand? if I think myself concerned to know, what the pride and covetousness, and malice and ambition of such and such a man may do against me; if I have any tincture of these evils, (as who dares say he hath not?) within my own soul; have not I a nearer thing to regret, than the evil that only lies in another man? To expect or fear all our hurt from without, and not to fear the next and nearest evil, is the greatest stupidity imaginable.

And then for the causes of common good, and so of our own, as that is involved: we hear, it may be, with a great deal of complacency of such principles generally implanted in the minds of men. What glorious times would they be, if all other men were such lovers of God, such orderly lovers of themselves, and such lovers of their neighbours, as they should be? but is it not of a great deal more concernment to our own felicity, that we be so ourselves? can the goodness, the piety,

the righteousness, the benignity of other men do me good, in comparison of what these things lodged and deeply rooted in my own soul would do? It is true, it were a most desirable thing to have all the world religious: but if all the rest of the world were so, and my own soul vacant of it; what should I be the better for that? if all other men were lovers of their own souls, it would be happy for them; but nothing to me, if I despised my own. Therefore let us learn, what our own present business must be; to labour to have the causes of common calamity wrought out from ourselves, and the causes of common felicity and prosperity inwrought into ourselves. We cannot tell how to mend the state and condition of the world; and our duty reaches not so far: but we have each of us a work to do at home, in our own bosoms. And if ever we expect to see good days, it must be in this way, by being good and doing good. Psalm 34, 14.

SERMON IX*.

WE are considering the principles, which the Spirit poured forth doth implant, conducive to the general prosperity and felicity of the people of God. And, as was said before, of the evil and mischievous principles, that naturally work their calamity and misery, that they may be all reduced to an inordinate self-love; so the good principles, which have a tendency to their welfare, may all be referred unto one common head, that of a due and well-tempered, well-proportioned love. When the Spirit of God comes to make a good and happy state of things to obtain and take place in the church; the work of that Spirit, poured forth for this purpose, is to write the laws of God in the hearts of his people. So you may find, (where there is a manifest reference to that future happy state promised, and which we are yet expecting and waiting for;) he speaks in that and in parallel scriptures of giving his Spirit, and of its immediate workings and operations. And this is its general work, to write his law in the hearts of his people, Jer. 31. 33. Now the law, we are told, all the law is fulfilled in that one word, Love, Gal. 5. 14. That is the sum and epitome of the whole law. And if we descend a little more to particulars, these three branches of a holy gracious love will

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do the whole business: that is,—that love to *God*, which he requires and claims:—that love of *particular persons*, each of them to themselves, which is due and regular: and—their love to *other men*, as to themselves; or measured by that love, which they duly bear to themselves.

[I.] Consider what the love of God is, according as the law requires; and that we must therefore believe will be, when God pours forth his Spirit generally, and by it writes his law upon the hearts of men. Here is the first and great thing in the law, as our Lord Jesus Christ himself gives us the system of it, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind, Matth. 22. 37, 38. What doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, &c. and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul? Deut. 10. 12. Do but consider, what this would do to make a happy world or a happy church, to have the love of God exalted into its just dominion and supremacy in the minds and souls of men: that is, suppose a universal agreement among men to love God with one consent, with all their minds and with all their souls and with all their strength, as far as the bounds of the church may be set. There must be considerable in this love to God; first, Zeal for his interest and honour: and, secondly, Desire of happiness in him. One is love to him, as our supreme and sovereign Lord: the other love to him, as our supreme and sovereign Good, our Portion and Felicity. Now,

Do but suppose, first, a general agreement amongst us in the former of these,—that entire devotedness unto the interest of God, which his love doth most certainly include and must possess the hearts of men with;—what an influence must this have! when there shall be no other contention amongst men, than who can do most for God, who can most greaten him in the world; when men shall generally agree in an entire devotedness unto the sovereign, supreme interest of the Lord of heaven and earth; do not you think, that would do much of this happy business? for what cause of contention can there be amongst men then? there are no quarrels in heaven; where that is the entire business of all, the thing wherein all consent and agree, to praise and honour, to adore and glorify their common Ruler and Lord: and so far as the happy state we are speaking of shall obtain in the church of God on earth, so far that will be the very image of the church of God in heaven. Where there is an agreement among persons upon an evil principle, do but consider how it compacts such people amongst themselves: see how united the people of Ephesus were in a false religion! as is noted by that orator, who bespoke them on occasion of

the commotion amongst them upon the apostle Paul's coming thither, in Acts 19. 35. "What man is there, that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?" It was it seems a most observable unanimity, that was amongst this people in this one thing, unto that degree, that the whole city is said to be but one worshipper. Now when the church shall come to be but one worshipper of the great God, all devoted to him to serve his interest; when there shall be but one altar, the many altars mentioned before being all overturned by that inundation of the Spirit poured forth, and now but one great interest to be served; must not this make a happy state of things so far as it obtains? it is the multiplicity and privateness of men's designs and ends, that sets all the world together by the ears, and makes men every where ready to tear one another in pieces: whether they go under the Christian name, or not, that makes no difference in the case; as certainly a wolf is never a whit the less a wolf for being clothed with a sheep's skin. But when persons shall become one, consenting and agreeing, by the influence of that great principle of divine love, in the main design and business of religion; this must produce a happy harmony. It is a very plain case, that if you draw a circumferential line, and place one centre within that circumference, you may draw as many straight direct lines as you will from any part of the circumference to that centre, and it is impossible you should ever make them to intersect or interfere with one another: but let there be several centres, and then you cannot draw lines from any part, but they must necessarily intersect and cross one another ever and anon. Here is the case before us. It is the making of many centres, that causes men to interfere, while every man makes his own self his end: no two men's interests can throughout and always agree; but that which this or that man does, to please and serve himself, disserves or displeases somebody else, and hereupon comes a quarrel. It is manifest, that sincere religion would cure all this: when there is but one end, and every man's business is to serve and glorify their common Maker and Lord; when all thus agree in the love of God, there would be no interfering: and how would that contribute to external prosperity!

Do but consider the other thing, which true love to God includes, that is, secondly, the desire of him as our portion, our best and supreme good; if that shall once come to be universal, (as it shall be, whenever the happy time comes, when the Spirit shall generally write the law of God in the hearts of men;) it must needs make stirs and contentions and troubles to cease

from amongst men, so far as it doth obtain. For, (as was intimated before,) where self-love is the ruling principle, self the great idol, and something or other of terrene good the sacrifice wherewith this idol is to be served; so the business of every man is to grasp in all that he can of the good things of this earth for himself. Now terrene good is (as our bodily part itself is, unto which it is most adapted and suited,) of such a nature, that it cannot be severed and divided into parts without being diminished and lessened in the several parts: it is not partible without diminution; so that the more one enjoys of it, the less every one else enjoys. But now, when the blessed God himself is the best good to every one, every one enjoys his share without the diminution of other's share. It is from the limitedness and unpartibleness of terrene good, without the lessening of the several parts, that it comes to be the object or occasion, about which or upon account whereof there is so much exercise of concupiscence, inordinate desire, envy, malice; every one labouring to catch from another, as thinking another's portion to be more than comes to his share, and his own less than should come to his: there is the occasion, (and the corrupt nature of man is apt to take occasion from any thing,) for stirring the lusts and passions I am speaking of, in reference to earthly good. But there is no occasion at all for the exercise of any such disquieting passions here: when there is a common agreement to make God their portion, to esteem him so with the Psalmist, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;" when this comes to be the common sense with men, no man's share is diminished by the greater and larger enjoyments of another. And therefore you do not find, that there is wont to be any exercise of disquieting passions in this case. Did you ever know any man, that entertained malice against another, because he himself desired to have very much of God, and he thought the other enjoyed more; there is no place or pretence at all for any such thing; because let another have ever so much, there is enough in the same fountain for him and for me too.

[ii.] Consider, what love towards a man's self is in the due kind and degree of it; and how that, when it shall come to obtain generally amongst men, must make towards the good and happy state of the church. That due and just love of a man's self, will have its exercise in these two things; first, a strict care of his mind and inner man. And, secondly, a due care also of the body or outward man.

A very strict care, first, of the mind and inner man. I remember a heathen, speaking of self-love, saith; "It is true

indeed, that every man ought to have a love to himself; there is a self-love that is divine, which God makes him to bear to himself." And by how much the more a man is a lover of himself with that kind of love, so much the less is he apt to disquiet other men, or to contribute any thing to common miseries. Now he that loves himself duly and aright, will principally and in the first place love his own soul; he will labour to cultivate that, to fit it for God, for his service and enjoyment: and about soul-concernments men's interests do not differ. Will you but suppose men thus employed and busied, intently taken up about their own eternal felicity and the present forming of their spirits in order thereto: such will not have leisure to give trouble to other men. They, that are all busy about this great affair, to intend their own spirits, to keep their hearts with all diligence, to depress whatsoever may be troublesome to themselves or offensive to God within them, to improve and adorn their souls, to fit them for, and render them capable of a blessed eternity; you may be sure will find very little leisure to concern themselves with the affairs of the world, to the trouble and disquiet of that: though, if they can be any way serviceable, they will be most earnest and ready to do that, from the same temper and disposition of spirit. They are the most troublesome people every where, that do least mind their own souls, and have least business to do at home.

A due care, secondly, of the body also is included in regular self-love. And that would signify not a little to a happy time; that is, if there were that care commonly taken of the outward man, and of what doth more immediately influence that, the appetites and affections and passions of the lower soul, wherein the true notion of temperance consists; which is one of the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. 5. 23. If men could generally keep the flesh and its inordinate cravings under a government, so that it shall not be gratified in every thing that it would, nor sensual inclinations be suffered to grow into exorbitancies: if all those things, that need to be corrected and reduced to order by sumptuary laws, were so reduced by a living law in every man's own self: if men were generally become by inward inclination chaste, sober; willing to content themselves with what is useful for the ends and purposes of nature, without making provision for the flesh and its lusts, to satisfy and content them; not addicting themselves to eat or drink more than is necessary, or to idleness and sloth and other pieces of indulgence to the flesh: there would be connected with such things as these, contentedness in every man's mind; (for lust is more costly than nature,

covets more and must have more ;) and hereupon necessarily a great deal of tranquillity and peace. For while men's minds are contented within themselves, they are very little apt to give discontent to others : but persons discontented themselves, restless and full of trouble, (which they are only by their lust,) are fit instruments then to give all the world trouble, so far as their power can go. Nor would it be a small ingredient in the common external happiness of such a time, that by this means there would be a more general healthiness of body among people. If that great fruit of the Spirit, temperance, did commonly obtain; (by which we are able each one to possess his vessel, his own body, in sanctification and honour, 1 Thes. 4. 4. to attend his own body even as the temple of the Holy Ghost ;) then there would not be that general cause of complaint concerning consuming and loathsome sicknesses, that are the great calamity of the age, and owing so manifestly in a high degree to unbridled lust. In that happy state of the church of God, wherein it is said, that the inhabitants of Zion shall not say they are sick, shall have no more cause to complain of sickness, because they shall be forgiven their iniquity, (Isaiah 33. 24.) I reckon, that forgiveness of sin hath a reference to that happy state of things, not only as it puts a stop to the inundations of divine judgments in other kinds but also as it hath a direct tendency to keep off the evil mentioned : that is, when sin is forgiven, the power of it is broken at the same time : God doth never forgive sin, and leave it reigning ; but he forgives and breaks the power of it at once. Now, as when sin is not forgiven, men are left to the swing and *impetus* of their own lusts, and so are the executioners of God's vengeance upon themselves : so, when sin is forgiven, it languishes and dies ; such a people grow more pure, holy, temperate, chaste, sober in all their conversation ; and so there comes to be less appearance of sickness and ails, and those calamities with which men naturally afflict their own flesh by the indulgence of their lusts. So that by the Spirit poured forth, and so a principle of due love to a man's self being once implanted and excited and kept in due exercise, it must infer generally both more contented minds and more healthful bodies ; and these things cannot but signify a great deal to make a very good time.

There is *another* branch of love, that must obtain, when God comes to write his law in the hearts of men by his Spirit ; love as it respects other men. But of this hereafter.

By what hath been said, it seems a plain case, that the Spirit of God poured forth would make a very happy *external* state of things. And since it is so proper and direct a means, and

would be so efficacious, were it poured forth; truly it cannot but be matter of very sad reflection, that the thing should not be done; that there should be so great, so dreadful a restraint of this blessed Spirit in our time and age, as we have cause to observe and complain of. It is matter of sad reflection, if you consider, what as an effect, it carries the signification of; and also what farther mournful effects it carries a presignification of, as a cause.

Consider, first, what an evil it carries in it the signification of, as an effect. The principle of such a restraint must needs be a very great degree of divine displeasure. It is the highest expression of such displeasure, that we can think of, and the most dreadful piece of vengeance, when God saith; Now because men have offended me at so high a rate, I will take away my Spirit from them. This was the act of vengeance, wherewith he punished the provocations of the old world, when the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and the imagination of his heart was all evil, and that continually: "Well!" saith he, "My Spirit shall no more strive with man, (Gen. 6. 3, 5.) I have done, my Spirit shall strive no more." It signifies the displeasure to be so much the greater, by how much the easier such a happy work as this might be wrought and brought about amongst us: it is no more but to let his Spirit breathe; and all our troubles, and all the causes of them must vanish at once: no, but saith God, "My Spirit shall not breathe, shall not strive." The event speaks the determination and purpose: it doth not breathe or strive: are we so stupid as not to observe that? is there that Spirit of love, of prayer and supplication stirring, as hath been wont? it is very terrible to think, that there should be such a restraint of that blessed Spirit, upon account of the signification made by it of divine displeasure.

Consider, secondly, the presignification it also carries with it of most dreadful effects to ensue, when in displeasure his Spirit retires and is gone. The not pouring forth of the Spirit signifies, that wrath must be poured forth. When the Spirit is restrained, wrath shall not be restrained long. The pouring forth of the Spirit and of wrath do, as it were, keep turns; there is an alternation between them. When the Spirit is not poured forth, then there is blindness, hardness, an eye that cannot see, an ear that cannot hear, and a heart that cannot understand; as you have them joined in Isaiah 6. 10. And how long must this continue? Lord, how long? saith the prophet there, ver. 11. it follows, "Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man." That is the answer given. And therefore methinks we should be all in a kind of trembling expectation, while the matter is so manifest, that

this blessed Spirit is under restraint. What doth it signify, but a purpose and determination of the offended majesty of the blessed God? "Let the lusts of men have their swing, let them rend and tear one another by the violent agitations and hurries of their own furious lusts." He hides his face all the while. I will hide my face, saith he, I will see what their end shall be, Deut. 32. 20. It is not difficult to apprehend, what will come of them, when once I give them up and leave them to themselves: then there need no other hands to be armed against them but their own; they will soon be self-destroyers: each man would be so to himself, if given up to the furious hurry and *impetus* of indwelling lust. Certainly we have reason to conclude, that this age hath highly displeased the Lord, that his Spirit is so much withdrawn, that could so easily work a cure: but yet he will not, he thinks fit to express resentment by holding under restraint that Spirit, that could rectify and set all right, and make us a very happy people in a moment.

SERMON X.*

WE are yet speaking of the tendency of that radical principle of love to make an external happy state of things, which we are to expect the Spirit when poured forth to implant. We have spoken of love to God, and of regular self-love; and of the influence which these severally must have towards a prosperous state.

[iii.] Consider what love to other men, as to themselves, would do in this matter. This supposes that second branch we have been insisting on, a due love to ourselves, as not only allowed but enjoined us; when it is made the measure of the love we are to bear and exercise toward other men: and therefore, as being a deeper and more fundamental law of nature, that must be supposed to be more excellent and noble in its own kind. *Perfectessimum in suo genere est mensura reliquorum.* But the Spirit, whose work and business it is to write the laws of God in the hearts of men, when he shall be poured forth, will write this also, that they love other men as they ought to love themselves: especially in the latter days, the times which our discourse refers to. Because so great a part of that law is wrapped up in this love; therefore it cannot but be that in those latter days, when God doth design to reform

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and new mould things, the felicity and happy state of things shall be brought about very much by the mediation and intervenience of this love and the influence thereof. And because this love hath a most direct influence this way, I have designed the more to enlarge upon it; and shall speak of it according to that double reference, which our subject obliges us to consider; that is,—its reference to God and his Spirit, as the author of it; and—its reference unto a happy state of things, as that which is to be brought about by it—its reference upwards to God, and downwards to the world—which two considered together will amount to thus much; that by God's working of this love more generally amongst men, that happy and blessed issue, that we are speaking of, is to be accomplished.

Consider we, *first*, its reference to God and to his Spirit: which we are necessarily to consider; otherwise the pouring forth of the Spirit would not include it. And it is requisite we should insist upon this, inasmuch as such love is too commonly meanly thought of: it were well, if there were not cause to say, that too generally professors of religion at a higher and stricter rate had not too low an opinion of this love in the scripture-regulation of it, the loving of others as ourselves, the measure unto which it is to be adjusted. And true it is indeed, that they who know no more of this matter than only the mere sound of the words, they into whose heart the thing never entered, and with whom it never yet became a vital, living law will think it but a mean thing. It looks in such persons eyes, while it is only clothed with a verbal representation and no more, as a meanly habited person at their doors, whom they guess at only by his garb: and if such a one should have meanness objected to him only from thence, and the case will admit it; it is but a doing himself right to speak of his parentage, and tell how nobly he is descended. And so much are we to do on the behalf of this love, to let you know it is a heaven-born thing, descended of God, that owes itself to heaven: it is of no lower and meaner extraction than so. Do not think I mean by it that common carnal love, which wicked men as such may bear one to another; which is a more mean and less innocent love, than that which birds and beasts have to those of their own kind: but I mean that love, whereby any are enabled to love men as men, and holy men as holy men, in God, and for God's sake, and upon his account. This is a heavenly, divine thing, the product of the blessed, eternal Spirit of God alone. For evincing of that, weigh these several considerations, which the Scriptures do plainly and plentifully afford us. Namely, first,

That even this love is called the love of God. So it is most

plainly in 1 John 3. 17. Whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him; how dwelleth the love of God in him? So noble and sublime a thing is not to be more meanly spoken of, it is to be called the love of God: no title inferior to that is suitable to it. Again, secondly,

That God is called the God of this love. Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you, 2 Cor. 13. 11. And thirdly,

It is also expressly said to be of God, and men upon the account of this love to be born of God. So in 1 John 4. 7, 8, Beloved, let us love one another; for love (this love plainly,) is of God; and every one that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God; is acquainted with God, intimate and inward with God; as a man's own children would be with him, that are born of him, in whom his own nature is. Whereupon, on the other hand, they are spoken of as mere strangers to God, such as have nothing to do with him, nor he with them, that are destitute of this love. He that loveth not, knoweth not God; for God is love. Again, fourthly,

That it is plainly made a character of the elect of God, distinguishing and severing of them from the refuse world, Colos. 3. 12. Put on, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, &c. Intimating plainly to us, that wheresoever God doth place his own love, there he doth impress and beget this love. Again, fifthly,

It is placed amongst the fruits of the Spirit, and even in the front of them, Gal. 5. 22. The fruit of the Spirit is love; in opposition to the hatred, wrath, strife, &c. mentioned in the foregoing verses as the works of the flesh. And we are told in Eph. 5. 9. that the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness and truth—in all goodness:—it is the proper work of the Spirit upon the spirits of men to fill them with goodness, propensions and inclinations to do good; and so to beget in them that love, which must be the spring of all such doing of good. Hence sixthly,

Walking in the Spirit is directed with a special eye and reference unto the exercise of this love; as you may see in Gal. 5. the 14th, 15th, and 16th verses compared together. All the law is fulfilled in one word, (he means the whole law of the second table,) even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, (the opposite to this love, or that which follows upon the want of it, or from the opposite principle,) take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. This I say then, (observe the inference,) Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. To walk in the Spirit is to walk in the exercise of this love. Seventhly,

It is spoken of as a peculiar, inseparable concomitant of that light, which is from God and the Spirit of God, and made and transmitted by the gospel. Observe to this purpose, 1 John 2. 7, &c. Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning: the old commandment is the word, which ye have heard from the beginning. Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you; because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith, he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother, is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. A new commandment this is, and now new: not new, in respect of the substance of it; for so it is one of the ancient, substantial, fundamental, great laws of nature; and wheresoever the revelation of God's mind and will is to be found, that is and was ever to be found: but new, in respect to that more glorious way of recommendation, which it now hath in and by the gospel, and the Spirit of Christ; which, wheresoever it comes to obtain, in what soul soever, transforms that soul into a heavenly region, a region of calm and mild and benign and holy light: in that light dwells this love, amidst that light; as the contrary, hatred, is a fiend that lives and lurks in darkness, and can dwell no where else. They that are destitute of this principle, have darkness for their region; they can dwell no where but in malignant, disconsolate darkness; there they wander as forlorn bewildered creatures. The apostle Peter having spoken of this love under several names, brotherly-kindness, charity, and other expressions that are congenerous, tells us, 2. Pet. 1. 9. He that lacketh these things, is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Eighthly,

It closely adheres unto that principle of life, which is begotten in all the children of God, when they become his children. The begetting of souls unto God, is certainly the implanting in them and deriving to them a principle of divine life. With that principle this love is complicated, or it is a part of that very principle; so as that by it the children of God and the children of the devil are distinguished from one another. He that hath this principle, hath passed from death to life, is in a state of life: as you may find by comparing together several verses of the 1 John 3. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, (therefore he is of the devil,)

neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message, that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another: not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous, ver. 10, 11, 12. and ver. 14. We know, that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death; hath no participation of that vital principle. He is a murderer, ver. 15. and ye know, that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. None that is apt to destroy the life of another, can be supposed to have a principle of divine life in himself, the beginning of eternal life. So that, divide the world into two seeds, and they are God's and the devil's. Those that are God's, live the life of God; have a life derived and communicated to them from God, wherein this same love is a part: and they that are destitute of it, are all to be reckoned to the other seed; they belong to the devil's kingdom; for to be destitute of this, implies a being possessed with the contrary principle: no man's soul can be neutral in this case. But as to all such good principles, as are due unto the original rectitude of man and his nature as originally right; if these be wanting, they are privatively wanting, and are excluded by the opposite principle obtaining and having place in their room and stead: the soul of man had that and such principles as are duly belonging to him; it cannot be *resa tabula*; but if the true and proper impression be not there, there is another impression, and not none. And therefore it is consequent, tenthly,

That this love must needs be a great part of the divine image and nature, that is to be found in all that appertain to God.

All these things taken together do sufficiently entitle the Spirit of God to it, as the great Author and Parent of it. And that being once plain and clear,

We may, *secondly*, consider the other reference of this love, its reference downwards towards the world: and it cannot but be consequent, that wheresoever the Spirit poured forth doth work, it must needs work a very happy state of things, and would make this world a very pleasant region. For what! would it not make, think you, very happy days indeed to have men generally made like God, transformed into the divine image? God is love; and he that loves, bears his image: he, whose soul is under the dominion of such a love, is a true living representation of all the goodness and benignity and sweetness of God's own blessed nature: and would it not make a happy state, if men were generally made such? so to bear themselves to one another, so to converse and walk toge-

ther, as holding forth the image of God, according to the dictates of a nature received from God, a divine nature put into them; but for the particular eviction of this, it will appear by considering the proper, natural, genuine workings of such love, being itself once inwrought. Consider to that purpose,—what it would exclude, and—what it would beget. First,

What it would exclude.

It would, first, exclude all hard thoughts amongst men concerning one another. Love thinketh no evil; as one of the characters of it is in 1 Cor. 13. 5. Farther than necessity and irrefragable evidence doth impose, it would not take up so much as an ill thought of any one. It is full of candour and ingenuity, and apt to make the best construction of every word and action, and takes every thing in the best sense that is capable of being put upon it. And what a spring of mischief and misery in the world would be shut up, dried up, if that proneness to hard, harsh, and frequently unjust thoughts, were by the workings of such a Spirit of love erased out of the minds and hearts of men!

It would, secondly, exclude every thing of pride and insolence towards others, vying with them, envying of them, which proceeds from pride. Love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, 1 Cor. 13. 4.

It would, thirdly, exclude selfish designs; and with what tragedies and desolations do they fill the world? Love seeketh not her own things 1 Cor. 13. 5. The exhortation is, Phil. 2. 4. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Indeed it comes from that pride mentioned before, that men think all belongs to them, and if they can grasp ever so much, it is no more than their due: and therefore we have these things so conjoined in the place just mentioned, ver. 3. 4. Each esteeming other better than themselves, and, not seeking his own things, but also the things of others.

Men are so much intent upon seeking their own things, are all for themselves; because every man is apt to esteem himself before all other men: but when we come to esteem others better than ourselves, (I am worthy of nothing, any mean thing is good enough for me;) then pride and selfishness are both excluded together by love.

It will, fourthly, exclude all aptness to injure another. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour, Rom. 13. 10. Love so measured, whereby I love my neighbour even as myself, and whence therefore it comes to pass that I would no more hurt him than I would myself, and would no more cheat him than I would myself, no more oppress and crush him than I would myself;

would not this make a happy world, do we think? the fruit of the Spirit is in all righteousness, Eph. 5. 9.

As it would by these means exclude all aptness to offend others; so it would, fifthly, exclude a proneness to receive offence; and so make greatly to the quiet of the world. A good man, one himself full of love and goodness, is very little prone to take offence. As a heathen philosopher said concerning such a one; "A good man neither doth injure, nor is apt to resent an injury." So another discourses largely to shew, that *in sapientem non cadit injuria*: injury doth not fall, doth not enter and sink (he means) into the mind and soul of a good, a wise and virtuous man. This love excludes a captious disposition, apt to take offence at every thing, and to pick quarrels upon any or upon no occasion. What happy families would there be, what happy neighbours, when such a disposition should be excluded and banished by the over-ruling power of a Spirit of love? there wouldbe no fractions in families, no parties, no maligning of one another; which commonly have their rise from an aptness to snarl at any thing that goes cross. Secondly,

What it would beget.

It would, first, beget mutual trust and confidence among men and christians in one another; which makes not a little unto the common welfare. How sad is the case, when a man still continually converses with them whom he cannot trust, and they cannot trust him! A mutual confidence and trust in one another is fundamental to all society, to the good and prosperity of it. The apostle desires to be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men, that have no faith, 2 Thes. 3. 2. It is probable he means, that have not trustiness, faith in the passive sense; that are unconversable men, such in whom we can place no faith. It is a dreadful thing to live in such a world or age, when a man must perpetually stand upon his guard, be so very cautious in all his converses and words and actions: "I do not know whom to trust, whom to deal with." When this Spirit of love shall have to do more in the world, as men are generally made more sincere and good; so they shall generally be more trusted: jealousy and suspicion and mistrust and misgiving thoughts concerning one another are gone, and they are secure concerning one another; as no more suspecting, that such a man hath an ill design upon me, than I have upon myself.

It would, secondly, produce mutual pity. That would be a good world, when every man resents another's condition even as his own, and weeps with them that weep, as well as rejoices with them that do rejoice, Rom. 12. 15.

It would, thirdly, produce a promptitude to do one another

good upon all occasions. Such a love, by the Spirit poured forth coming commonly to obtain, will make men dispossed to do good, as opportunity occurs, Gal. 6. 10. As we have opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.

It will, fourthly, beget a delight in one another's welfare, a well-pleasedness in the prosperity of others, that all things go well with them.

It will, fifthly, introduce mutual converse, solace and delight in one another's society. When a man shall see the face of his friend or neighbour as the face of an angel of God; he full of love, and the other full of love; nothing but goodness flowing and reflowing; this will surely make a good time, when the Spirit of God poured forth shall generally influence the spirits of men unto such a temper.

This must needs make a very happy state of things, make the church on earth the very emblem of the church in heaven; as the truth and sincerity of religion and godliness is not another thing from the felicity and blessedness of heaven, in the nature and kind. It is the same church, that hath the primordials of blessedness here, and the perfection of it hereafter. This is one great part of that blessedness, when all are inclined by the operation of that Spirit, whose fruit is in all goodness, to seek and desire and rejoice in the good of one another, as they would do for their own.

We can now easily frame to ourselves the idea of a very happy time; and we ought to believe, that the Spirit of God can work all that we can think, and a great deal more, when his own time and pleasure is. What hath been suggested, must produce tranquillity in every man's own spirit; which will infer common tranquillity. They, that have themselves unquiet, disturbed spirits, are the great troublers of the world. Therefore the devil works all that mischief to mankind, because he is himself a restless creature, going up and down, seeking a rest, but finding none. Men will be at rest in their own spirits, when they come to be under the possession and dominion of such a spirit as we have spoken of.

SERMON XI.*

WE have been evincing the efficacy and sufficiency of an effusion of the blessed Spirit, such as we hope for in the latter times, to produce not only a prosperous state of religion, but also an external peaceful state of the church, in consequence of the other: and this last, not only by removing the causes of general calamities; but by working likewise whatever hath a positive tendency to public good. Upon this head it was proposed to consider, —The *principles*, which the Spirit poured forth is supposed to implant. These have been distinctly considered. † And we now proceed to consider,

ii. The effects, which the Spirit works by those implanted principles, tending to the common prosperity of the whole church. They may be reduced to these two, *Union, and Order*: which will, both of them, promote very happy times for the church of God.

(i.) Union amongst christians is one of those great effects, which are to be wrought by the Spirit poured forth, as a thing wherein such a good state of things, doth very much consist. Here I shall shew,

[i.] That such a union amongst christians will contribute very much to a happy state in the church of God, whenever

* Preached September 18th. 1678. † See page 302.

it is brought about. It would, first, secure it very much from external violence. Hereby it would be terrible "as an army with banners," would dismay enemies, and such as might design to trouble it. Such union would make way for undisturbed communion. And, secondly, within the church itself there would be free and pleasant commerce. Christians would not be at a loss and difficulty, what way they were to take in order to the stated discharge of incumbent Christian duties. And what in both these respects such a union will contribute unto the common felicity of the Christian church, we are too well taught to apprehend, by our experience and observation of what we have felt or heard of the mischiefs and miseries of the church in both these kinds. How miserably hath Christendom been worried by the Turkish power, upon account of its own divisions? and within the Christian church itself, never hath it suffered more turmoils and trouble and vexation than from intestine division. It hath been a common observation in the former days, that the arian persecution was as cruel and wasting to the sincere christians as ever the paganish persecutions were; and some have reckoned, a great deal more. And we do not need to tell you, what the popish persecutions have been upon the protestants, and what persecutions have been even among protestants of one another. The church hath first been broken into parties, then these several divided parties have fallen to contending, and those contentions have grown to that height, that nothing less than the ruin of each several party hath been designed by another. And you cannot but observe or have known, that differences upon the slightest and most trivial matters have been managed with that heat and animosity, that nothing less could content and satisfy than even to crush unto utter ruin those that have dissented. But where were all that contention, if the contending parties were become all one? and where were all that hatred and enmity and malice, that hath managed these contentions? For what! doth any united thing, entire within itself, hate itself, and seek to ruin itself? I proceed therefore to shew,

[ii.] That it is the work of God's own Spirit to effect such a union; and consequently, that when it shall be generally poured forth, such a union must needs generally obtain. And the matter will be very clear from sundry Scripture-considerations: as first,

We find in Scripture this matter mystically and allegorically represented; that is, that by the anointing of this Spirit, that precious ointment plentifully poured forth upon the head of our great High-priest, and diffusing itself unto all that appertain and belong to his body, that good and pleasant thing

should be brought about, of brethren's dwelling together in unity. This is typically represented by the ointment shed upon Aaron, diffused unto the skirts of his garments. Ps. 133. 1. 2. It can have no other meaning, but that the anointing of the Holy Ghost, eminently and in the first place upon our Lord Jesus Christ, and thence diffused to all that relate to his body, brings this blessed thing about.

We find, secondly, this anointing of the Holy Ghost upon christians mentioned in Scripture as the great preservative against divisions. So you may see by perusing the greater part of 1 John chap. 2. There is a discourse (as it is much the subject of the epistle,) about the vital love that ought to be amongst the brethren; and thence he comes to take notice of a danger that would threaten christians, from the many antichrists that would arise, and that had in part risen, ver. 18. As ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists, whereby we know that it is the last time. For so it was said that it should be in the latter times, or in the last part of time, even that from Christ unto the end of the world. Now wheresoever there are such antichrists starting up, pro-christs, mock-christs, those concerning whom it should be said, "Here is Christ, and there is Christ;" every one of these makes it his business to draw away a part; and so all their design is division, to snatch to themselves and draw off from Christ: (he that gathers not with him, scattereth;) their endeavour and aim is to divide. But, as a great preservative against the malignity of this design, the apostle tells them, that they had an unction from the Holy One, ver. 20. There was their security: and at ver. 26. 27. These things have I written unto you, concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him, abideth in you: the anointing of this Spirit, whereof we speak. A plain signification, that the genuine work of this Spirit is to unite, and to hold the parts of the body of Christ united, tight and firm unto one another. As much as if he should have said; "You were lost, the body of Christ were dissolved, were it not for such an anointing: there are many that make it their business to draw away here a limb and there a limb, to pluck and dissect it part from part; but ye have an anointing, there is all your security."

Again, thirdly, the divisions, which fall out in the church of Christ, we find in Scripture attributed unto the want and absence and destitution of the Spirit. A plain argument, that union is its work where it is, and according to the degree in which it is amongst the people of God. Jude 19. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.

And as a like note and expression of sensuality, you have the apostle Paul speaking, in Rom. 16. 17, 18. Mark them which cause divisions and offences,—and avoid them: for they that are such, serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly. A sensual sort of men, amongst whom there is little appearance of the Spirit, of being governed by the pure and Holy Spirit of God. And whom can we think him to reflect upon in such expressions, those that separate themselves, and cause divisions, but such as do make new terms of communion in the church of Christ, which Christ himself hath never made, and insist upon them; "You shall not have communion with us, unless you will come to these terms?" as the Gnostics of old did; patching up a religion, partly out of Judaism, and partly out of Heathenism, and partly out of Christianity; and so making themselves a distinct body upon new terms from the rest of christians. And so the papists have since done; and being associated and compacted together upon these terms, now assume to themselves the name and title of the church; they only are the church! cutting off themselves by such measures as these from all the rest of christians, as if they were none of the church, because they do not consent with them in things that are beside Christianity and against it. And by how much the less and more minute the things are, by which persons make such difference and distinction, upon which they sort and sever themselves from the rest of christians, so as to exclude all others; so much the more groundless and ridiculous is the division. A like case, as if a company of men should agree amongst themselves to be distinguished from other men by such or such a habit, such or such a colour of their garments, and call themselves mankind, and deny all others to be mankind: or as if a party in the city should distinguish themselves by some little trivial distinction, and call themselves the city, and deny all the rest to be citizens. This is from not having the Spirit. That Spirit, wheresoever it is and works in power, works like itself, suitably unto the greatness and excellency of such a Spirit, and suitably to the grand designs of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose Spirit it is. It possesses and takes up the minds of men with things that are great, and does not teach them to insist upon themselves, or to impose and urge upon others, niceties and small trivial matters. Is this like the Spirit of the great and holy God? like the wisdom and holiness of that Spirit? or suitable to the greatness of those designs, which it is to manage amongst men? So they, that divide upon such accounts as these are, "are sensual, not having the Spirit, and serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own bellies." And therefore according to the degree in which such di-

visions have taken place amongst christians, they have been spoken of not as spiritual, but as carnal. I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal; saith the apostle to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 3. 1. "I could not tell how to look upon you, or converse with you, or apply myself to you, as spiritually-minded men; but as men miserably carnal, even lost in carnality": for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? ver. 3. It is not like a Christian spirit, like the Christian design, but like other men. And therefore we also find, that where the works of the flesh are enumerated, Gal. 5. ver. 19, &c. among them come seditions, heresies, διχοστασιαι and αιρεσεις; by which there are sidings, part-takings, part set against part, one party against another; and severings, divulsions and rendings in the church, plucking it as it were piece-meal this way and that. In opposition whereto divers things, that have the contrary tendency, as love, meekness, peace &c. are made the fruits of the Spirit in the following verses.

The unity, that doth obtain in the Christian church, in what degree soever it doth obtain is, fourthly, called the unity of the Spirit: as in Eph. 4. 3. Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. A unity therefore no doubt it is, whereof the Spirit is the author and the preserver; according as it doth keep the bond of peace unbroken amongst christians, keeps them in a peaceable temper and deportment towards one another. The Spirit of God is the warrantee of the church's peace, and it is his part to preserve it entire; but yet so, as that every one hath a part of his own in a way of duty, and in subordination to the Spirit of God, to act too; and must contribute to it, each one in his place and station. And therefore, as though there be never so potent a warrantee of peace amongst nations, it is possible that these nations may by their own default fall foul upon one another; so it may be proportionably in this case. Christians by indulging the first risings of another spirit, a contentious, malignant spirit, may grieve that Spirit that is to be their preserver, causing it to retire and withdraw; and so he may leave them to look on, and see what their end will be, and what they will bring matters to themselves: as, when he hides his face, and withdraws his Spirit, the great God saith, I will hide my face, and see what their end will be, Deut. 32. 20. But what unity there is, that is true and of the right kind, is the unity of the Spirit: and that shews it is his proper work, where it doth obtain, and according to the measure wherein it is poured forth, to cause and preserve such unity.

The subject of such a union is, fifthly, also the seat and

receptacle and habitation of the communicated Spirit. That, which is the subject of such a union, is also the subject and dwelling-place (as I may speak,) of the indwelling Spirit: it comes to dwell there, where the proper subject of this union is. That is a signification to us, that it hath a great influence upon this union; that where it dwells, there cannot but be some union, a union even in the main and principal things amongst all living christians. They are all come as lively stones unto the living corner-stone, (1 Pet. 2. 4, 5.) and compacted into a habitation of God through the Spirit, Eph, 2. 22. Where the union is, there the Spirit is, in contradistinction to all the rest of the world. That part, where the Spirit of God inhabits, is his church. And therefore to be added to the church, or to become christians, if a man become so indeed, is at the same time to receive the Spirit. Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? are ye so foolish, having begun in the Spirit? Gal. 3. 2, 3. They were supposed to have received the Spirit and to have begun in the Spirit, inasmuch as they were christians. And therefore one of the last things, that the apostle Peter spoke to his hearers, in that sermon by which so many thousands were converted, was, Repent,—and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost, Acts 2. 38. If ye be converts in truth, the Holy Ghost immediately comes upon you. Indeed in their becoming converts it seizes them: and when it hath made them converts, and formed them into a habitation, then it comes and dwells, and they receive it as an inhabitant; as a house must be built, before it be inhabited: and he that was the builder, is the inhabiter. Hereupon it is said, that they that have not the Spirit of Christ are none of his, Rom. 8. 9. They that are related to him, and they that are unrelated, are discerned by this, the having or not having his Spirit: Christ's Spirit enters and possesses all his. The true Christian church, the mystical body of our Lord Jesus Christ, as that is the seat and subject of the union whereof we are speaking, so it is also the residence of the Spirit: and therefore certainly the Spirit hath much to do in the business of this union.

The very cause of this union amongst christians, sixthly, so far as it doth obtain, is the oneness of this Spirit. It is because that Spirit is one, that dwells every where in them all, that they are one. And so it doth appear, that the Spirit is not only there seated, and dwells in the same subject where the union is; but it is the very cause, why there is such a union in the body, because it dwells in every part of it. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, Eph. 4. 4. And the reason, why the members of the

body, though they are many, are yet said to make but one body, is, because by one Spirit they are all baptized into one body, and have been made to drink into one Spirit, 1 Cor. 12. 13. As if it should have been said; "You are so little one upon any other account, or under any other notion, than only as one Spirit hath diffused itself amongst you and cements you together, and refers and disposes you towards one another; that the body of Christ would be no more one than a rope of sand, there would be no more cohesion of the parts, but if there were opportunity, part would be severed from part. The body, though it consist of many members, yet is all one body, because ye have been "all baptized into one Spirit, and made to drink into one Spirit:" referring to the two sacraments, baptism, and the supper of our Lord; as both of them significative of the union, which persons do then enter into with the rest of the body; and as they are confirmed in it with the rest of the body, according as they make use of, or are subjected to, one or the other of these rites. And so you know it is in the natural body. What other reason can we render, why so many parts should all but constitute one man? he hath one bond, one internal living bond, one soul. If there were one soul in one part, and another soul in another part; one soul in a leg, and another in an arm, another in an eye, and another in an ear; then it would not be one man, but many. The union is to be reduced into this, that there is but one soul as a consistent standing principle. For the parts of a man's body, as the parts of a church, are in a continual flux, continually passing; they wear and waste, and there is a constant succession of new parts, to make up the pretermission of the former that are past away and gone: and yet there is but one man still, notwithstanding that great change of parts in the several successions of time in his life, because he hath still but one soul. And so the church is still but one and the same thing, because it hath one Spirit, that in all times hath acted uniformly and equally.

It appears, seventhly, to be proper to the Spirit to work and maintain such a union as this; inasmuch as the principal operation, which it doth exert and put forth as the chief and main work which it doth, doth always necessarily imply this, of uniting and keeping the parts of the body united, as a secondary and consequential work. It cannot do its principal work, but it must do this. What is its principal and main work? it is (as hath been intimated,) unto the church of Christ, even as a soul unto the body. And what is the office and business of the soul to the body? it is to animate the body, to enliven it in the several parts of it: but that it could never do, but by uniting the parts and keeping them united. You know, that if a

finger or a toe, or a leg or an arm be cut off from the body, the soul enlivens that no longer: therefore it animates it, as it keeps it united with the body. The case is manifestly thus here: the Spirit of God keeps the body alive, and all the several parts of the body which it animates, by holding them together: as all the members of this body partake of other privileges in a community, as they belong to the body; as for instance, that of peace, and that communion which it includes and carries in it. Ye are called to it, saith the apostle, in one body, Col. 3. 14. Ye are to share and partake in such a privilege, as being all of a piece, all of one body; called in one body to this great commerce of Christian peace and communion. You know, that full peace between people and people, nation and nation, doth include commerce. So we may say of life too; persons are called to the participation of life all in one body, as being parts of that body, they come to share in life. The Spirit doth not animate, but as it unites, and keeps united the several parts which it animates; no more than our soul will animate any part of our body that is once separate from it. Now this plainly argues it to be the work of the Spirit to effect and maintain this union.

All the terms of this union, eighthly, wherein christians do meet, are such whereunto they are disposed and inclined by this Spirit. You have these terms in Eph. 4. 4, &c. The apostle had said, that there was one body and one Spirit. Now wherein doth this Spirit make this body one? Why, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; inasmuch as they have all one hope, and all one Lord, and one faith, and one baptism, and one God and Father of them all. Now it is manifest, that it is the work of the Spirit to draw and dispose the hearts of christians to meet in these common terms. As, to meet in this as a common term, in one hope, one blessedness and state of life. You know how the rest of the world are divided about blessedness; one places his confidence in this sort of good, and another in that sort: there be numbered up no less than two hundred and eighty eight opinions among the heathens heretofore about blessedness, wherein it should consist: now how comes all sincere christians to agree in this, to hope for blessedness all in one thing, in that state of life and glory that is hereafter to be enjoyed? and that all in all times of the world should have met in the same hope? All this must be owing to one cause, and proceed from one principle. The rest of men are divided; why are they united in this hope? and so, as to the rest, if we should run over them. They have all one Lord, sincerely agree to be subject to that one head; "He shall rule over us, we will all trust him, and all obey him.

They have all one faith; are all of one religion as to the essentials and main of it, believe all the same substantial truths, and all by one and the same sort and kind of faith; have the same object of faith in the main, and the same subject too in the nature and kind of it. They have all one baptism; which is not to be understood so much of the *signum*, as of the *res signata*, what is signified by it, that is, the covenant and agreement that passes between God and them that are baptized with his Spirit; unto whom the external baptism comes to obtain the thing which is intended to be signified corresponding in them. They all agree in one baptism, all come under one title, all give up and devote themselves under the bond of God's covenant alike, and in one and the same covenant: for God doth not make one covenant with one person, and another covenant with another; but they all meet in the same covenant. "And one God and Father of all." How come they all to have this one God and Father? it is one Spirit, that disposes and forms them hereunto. And in short, holiness, real substantial goodness, which doth some way or other include all these, as meeting in every one of them, and so uniting them: all sincere christians meet in that. And how come they to meet in it? by chance? no certainly; but by one designing cause, that works them all the same way. That so great a community, so vast a body as the christians of all times and ages, the people of God, in all the parts of the world and in all times of it, should all meet and unite in so many things, and in this one thing, namely, substantial goodness and holiness; must needs be all from one cause: they being things too, wherein they cannot be supposed to agree naturally; for naturally, men are most disagreeing and repugnant as to such things as these. And therefore we may see, (that which it is very remarkable that a heathen should say, speaking of concord in a city,) "That there can be no concord at all in any thing, if there be not some common notices, wherein persons shall meet and agree. So (speaking in reference to common and ordinary affairs,) it were impossible that persons should agree about the numbers of things, if there were not amongst them some common knowledge about the difference of numbers. If one person should understand one to be the number five, and another should understand it by another thing; or if persons could not generally understand so much of the matter of number, as to distinguish five from seven, (one number from another;) they could have no agreement in any common matter, wherein number was concerned. And so, saith he, If there be any accord about things that come under measure; it is to be supposed, that there must be a common notice amongst all such persons,

so far as to understand the difference between a palm and a cubit. And so there will be no agreement in things, that are of greater concernment to the good of a city, but by agreeing in this, that all agree to be good men: they cannot be good citizens, without being good men." But how should men come to be so? how should there come to be such a number of men, all agreeing in one thing and design, to be all for God in a world that is revolted and apostatized from him? It must be all from one cause and principle. It is one and the same Spirit, that in all times and ages works and disposes the spirits of such one way; so as that you may observe, that in all times there have been amongst christians the same complaints, the same desires, the same designs; they have had the same sense of things. Such a uniformity, as doth appear even in the several successions of time, signifies, that there is one common unitive principle, that hath obtained amongst them all in all times; and so accordingly, that such a union must needs be the proper work of this blessed Spirit.

Observe, ninthly, When a people do fall off, and break themselves off from God, (which they never do, but as this Spirit departs and leaves them,) according to that degree wherein they do so, they are broken off from one another, broken asunder amongst themselves. This we have emblematically represented in Zech. 11. by the two staves of beauty and bands. When one of them, the staff of beauty, was broken, (that was the representation of the union that was between God and them;) next the staff of bands is presently broken, (which was the representation of the union between Judah and Israel, of the people amongst themselves,) ver. 10. 11, 14. When God saith, *Loammi*, ye shall be my people no more; then the consequence is this, they cease to be a people; they are no more one people, when they cease to be his. The case is not so with those who have professed visible relation to God, as with the rest of the world, in this thing. Others make shift to subsist and live without God, that is, they gain flourishing kingdoms and common-wealths and cities; and it may be a people professing the name of God may expect to have it so with them too, if God should depart from them: but his presence is as a soul amongst such a people; "Be instructed, lest my soul depart from you:" and if a man's soul go from him, he doth not then become a creature of the next inferior rank, a beast, but a carcase. If this soul depart from a people professing relation to God, (as there is a divine presence that is larger than the most special presence, and yet more restrained than the general presence that he affords to men as men;) they do not then become like another people, but they become no people. Be instruct-

ed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee; lest thou become desolate, a land not inhabited, Jer. 6. 8. They may think, it may be, that it will be with them as with other nations, when God is gone: but see what a rebuke any such hope meets with, in Hos. 9. 1. Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people; for thou hast gone a whoring from thy God, &c. The case will not be with you as with other people; you have forsaken your God, torn yourselves off from him. When the staff of beauty is broken, the staff of bands is broken too; and such a people as fall off from God, fall asunder: that it comes to at last; as the body of a man, when the soul is gone, dissolves and turns to dust.

And in the last place, tenthly, In the time of the revival of the church from under the state of death they have been in; when God so revives it, he unites it part to part. How clearly have you this represented in vision after vision, in the whole 37th chapter of Ezekiel? when the Spirit of life entered into those dry and dead bones, when he breathed upon them and made them live, he made them one, he made them a great army, ver. 10. And the next thing that you hear of is, this people's being made one stick in God's hand; Judah and Israel one stick, united with one another; and in God's hand, to signify him to be the centre of that union, ver. 19. When there is a recovery of the church out of a lapsed, apostatized state, out of that death that hath been upon it; then also part comes to part; as there the bones came together; and flesh, and sinews; and so every thing falls into its own place and order in each particular body; and all these bodies into such an order, as to make one collective and well-formed body. And so it is very plain too, that when God doth design to bring that state of things about in his church, as that he will now have his covenant with them to obtain everlastingly, so as never more to turn away from doing them good; then he hath promised that he will give them one heart and one way. Even at the same time, when he comes to be more visibly and eminently in the view of the world engaged to such a people as their God, and to have taken them exemptly from all other people to be his people; when this comes to be more explicit and notorious, so that all the world may take notice of it, and so that he will dwell with them, and be visibly present amongst them, have his glory amidst them, and not cease to do them good; (so these things are expressed, Jer. 32. 37,—41.) at the same time he gives them one heart and one way, so as that they are no more a rent and torn and shattered people, but all one, all agreeing about the very way of their walking with God according to that relation wherein they stand to him.

All these things do evidence, that such a union is the proper work of the Spirit; and that when it shall be poured forth generally and copiously, then this union shall obtain in a very great and visible glory. I should after all this speak a little more particularly to a twofold inquiry concerning this union: but of that hereafter.

From what hath thus far been said we may take notice, that our own divisions are a very sad argument to us, that the Spirit is in a great measure retired and withdrawn; that little of the Spirit is working amongst christians in our times, in comparison of what hath been, and in comparison of what we may hope will yet be. But it is grievous, whatsoever hath been, whatsoever shall be, that it is our lot to be in such a time, when there should be such a gloomy overcast upon the glory of the Christian church in this respect. What we see and what we hear of that distance and disunion amongst christians, is a sad argument, that the church is in a dismal lapse, the Spirit of God is in a great measure gone from amongst us, life retired and gone. If it were amongst us to enliven, it would be amongst us to unite.

SERMON XII*.

THAT which we have been upon in the last discourse, was; —that union amongst them that own and bear the Christian name, we may reckon, will be one great effect of the Spirit poured forth; upon which the happiness of the church will greatly depend.—Two things have already been spoken to upon this head, namely,—that such a union is of great concernment to the happiness and prosperity of the church: and—that it is the proper work of the Spirit of God to effect it; and consequently, that when that Spirit shall be generally poured forth, such a union cannot but generally obtain.

[iii.] There are two farther inquiries, which it will be requisite we somewhat insist upon relating to this matter: namely,—What kind of union this shall be, which we may expect the Spirit poured forth to accomplish: and—secondly, in what way we may expect the Spirit to accomplish it.

We inquire, *first*, what kind of union we may expect it to be.

And we may expect it shall be such in the general, as wherein the duty and happiness of the Christian church shall in very great measure consist; such as is required as matter of duty, and promised as matter of gift; and which will contribute much to the church's felicity. But inasmuch as we neither ex-

* Preached September 25th, 1678.

pect the church of God on earth to be perfectly sinless, nor perfectly happy; therefore we cannot expect this union to be perfect: nor therefore can we suppose any such things requisite to it, as must be thought requisite unto a perfect union. We cannot think it necessary, that this Spirit poured forth should be, as poured forth or communicated, an infallible spirit in order thereto, when it comes to be amongst men or in them: which you know some have thought very necessary in order to any union in the church of God; but have pretended highly to it, without being able to agree where to fix the seat of the spirit of infallibility they pretend to have amongst them. And since a union and agreement in holiness is as necessary for the church of God, as in truth; one would think there should have been as much pretence to an impeccable spirit as to an infallible, and every whit for as valuable reason: but they have been ashamed to pretend to the former, whilst the pretenders have been so notoriously vicious and vile in the view of all the world. And certainly, if there were an infallible spirit amongst such men, we may justly say it did *male hibitare*, it was ill-lodged and unfitly in the midst of so horrid impurities; and did no more become them, than a jewel of gold a swine's snout. But that we may be a little more particular here, we shall briefly shew,—what a union we are not to expect:—what union there already is amongst all living christians: and—what union we are farther to look and hope for.

Consider, first, what union we are not to expect.

Not such, as that all shall agree in the same measure of knowledge; and consequently, that there will not be an identity and sameness of apprehension throughout in all things; for then there must be the same measure of knowledge. There is no man, that thinks differently from another man but he thinks so differently either truly or falsely; and wherever the falsity lies, on the one hand or the other, there lies so much ignorance: but it is never to be thought, that all will have just the same measure of knowledge.

Nor can we, reasonably expect an agreement with all in the same pitch of holiness; that all will be holy alike; no one more holy, more spiritual, more heavenly than another.

Nor are we to expect, that all should agree in the same measure of joy or consolation; that there should be the same sensations of divine pleasure in all, the same pleasant motions of holy and spiritual affections; which, be they as holy and spiritual as they will, yet must also be complexional in a degree, and depend much even upon the bodily temper, wherein no man can think that all shall ever agree.

Nor can there be, such a union, as shall infer, that all

must be of the same rank and order, the same station and use in the church of God; which indeed would not belong to the perfection of union, but imperfection; it would be confusion, instead of regular and perfect union. Such kind of union we are not to expect.

And it is to be considered farther in reference to this matter, secondly, What kind of union there already is. And certainly some union there is among all these that are sincere and living christians: such I chiefly intend as the subject of the union, whereof I am discoursing. And there is, and cannot but be amongst all such, a union in those great and substantial things, which we have already had occasion to take notice of, in Eph. 4. 3, 4. They are all one body, one living, animated body by one and the same Spirit. They have all one hope of their calling, one happiness and end; one Lord, one faith; they are all substantially of one religion; one baptism, meaning by that (as hath been noted,) not so much the *signum* as the *signatum;* they are all comprehended within the bond of the same covenant of life and peace. They have all one God the Father of all, who is of all, and in all, and through all.

And, which sums up all this, one way or another, they are all united in one common head. The apostle, speaking of Christ, says, He is the head of the body, the church, Col. 1. 18. And to the same purpose, in Eph. 1. 22, 23. And by virtue of that union they have with Christ the Mediator, the head of the church, it comes to pass, that they do unite and agree besides in all the other things that were mentioned. They are all of his body. It is from him they all partake of that one and the same Spirit. It is he that hath opened heaven to them, given them a prospect of an eternal blessed state, brought life and immortality to light before their eyes: they are called by him in that one hope of their calling. It is a revelation from God by him, that is the matter of their common faith. He is the Mediator of that covenant, that comprehends them all. It is he that reduces and restores and reunites them to God, and sets all things right between him and them. Therefore herein is the sum of their union, that they have all one Head, wherein they are united.

And this their common Head is not only a political, but a vital Head; as is apparently enough represented in those most emphatical expressions, Eph. 4. 15, 16. where the metaphor is distinctly pursued of a union between the head and the body: that speaking the truth in love, we way grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted, by that which

every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. With which agrees that in Col. 1. 18. He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, &c. And that in chap. 2. 19, Not holding the head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God. All these expressions speak a vital union, such as every member in the body hath with the head, being by proper ligaments jointed into its own place, and so connected with those that finally and ultimately have more immediate connection with the head; from whence there are those several *ductus*, those conveyances of spirits, by which the head doth become a fountain of directive and motive influence unto the whole body. And so is our Lord Jesus Christ unto the church a fountain both of directive and motive influence, of light and life.

He is a Fountain of light to all true christians. For every beam of true light is a ray from that Sun of righteousness, shines from and through the Lord Jesus Christ. We are under a dispensation, wherein the Father speaks to us by his Son, who is the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, Heb. 1. 2. 3. This world were universally a region of nothing else but pure mere darkness, were it not for him, the light that lighteneth every one that cometh into the world, according to the several variations and degrees and kinds of light that shine here and there. And,

He is also a fountain of life and vital influence. That very light is vital light, the light of life. The life was the light of men, John 1. 4. And for all that have real union with him, it is because he lives, that they live also.

Herein therefore they have union with this Head. They all participate together in the light of divine truth, whereof he hath been the teacher; of all that saving wisdom and knowledge that is treasured up in him. In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, Col. 2. 3. And all that are really of his body, unite and meet in a participation of necessary light and knowledge from him; they partake according to their measure of necessary truth from that Fountain, so much as is essential unto the Christian religion, and necessarily concurs unto the constituting of that. And they all agree in the participation of motive and active influence from him, for the performance of all the essentially necessary duties and exercises that do belong to the Christian life. Such a union there is amongst all sincere christians. This is implied in the expression of holding the head before mentioned. They truly hold

the head, who are so united to it, as that by virtue of that union they receive and derive thence the knowledge and perception of all essentially requisite truth, and that life and power that is also requisite to the duty that lies upon christians as such.

There hath been a great deal of controversy, between the reformed and those of the roman church, about that distinction of the essentials and extra-essentials of Christianity. But let men cavil as long as they will, it would manifestly be the most absurd thing in all the world to deny the distinction: for, if any would deny it, I would inquire of them; Which part of the distinction is it, that you would deny? would you deny, that there are essential parts of Christianity? or else, that there are extra-essential parts? if the distinction be not good, one of these parts must be denied. But if any would say, there are no essential parts; that would be to say, that the Christian religion hath no being; for certainly that is nothing, unto which nothing is essential. And to say, that there are no extra-essential parts, is to say, that a man cannot be a christian unless he knows every thing of truth, and unless he punctually do every thing of duty, whether he know it or not: then a man could not be a christian unless he did certainly know the meaning of the number "six hundred sixty six," and a thousand difficult passages besides up and down the Scripture. So that in effect, to deny the distinction of essential and extra-essential parts in Christianity, or of it, must either be to deny that there is any such thing as Christianity, or that there is any such thing as a christian: if there be no essential parts, Christianity is nothing; for that is nothing, to which nothing is essential: and if there be none extra-essential, then there are no christians; for certainly there is no man, that knows and does every thing that belongs to the Christian religion. But that there are essential parts, and therefore extra-essential too, is most evident: and which the essential parts be, in contradistinction to all others, is not obscurely intimated to us in the Scripture itself, in such *summas* of Christian doctrine and practice, as we have pointed to us here and there in some remarkable texts. As, when we are told, 1 Cor. 8. 6. To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. Where we have the great objects, upon which religion terminates; God considered as God, the end; and Christ the mediator, the way to that end. And then we are not without what is summary too of the acts to be done in reference to those objects. The apostle, speaking of the course he had taken in unfolding the mysteries of the gospel,

resolves all into this sum; he had been testifying both to Jews and Greeks repentance toward God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, Acts 20. 21. Which are such acts or parts of Christian practice, as belong to the inchoation of the Christian course at first, and then to be continued afterwards through it; but so as to comprehend many particulars of practice besides; whereof our Lord Jesus Christ gives us another summary, Mat. 22. 37, &c. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. And, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, On these two commandments, saith he, hang all the law and the prophets. And indeed you have objects and acts implicitly comprehended together in that great summary, that is expressive of the faith, into which Christ directed his apostles to proselyte all nations, into which they were to baptize them; that is, into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, Mat. 28. 19. Where the Father is to be considered as the end, the Son as the way, and the Spirit as the great principle to move souls towards that end through that way. Now there are none, that are sincere and living christians, but do and must unite in such things as these, these great essentials and substantials of the Christian religion.

But it may now be said; If there be so much union amongst all christians already in these so great and substantial things; what farther union must we look for? which was the next thing we proposed to speak to upon this head;

To consider, thirdly, what farther union we are yet to expect and hope for. And it must be acknowledged, and ought to be lamented, that there is all this union with very much disunion; such disunion, that is in a high degree dishonourable to God, scandalous to the world, and uncomfortable to the Christian community within itself. You well know, that there may be one house standing upon one foundation; and yet miserably shattered, ill-supported, ill-covered. There may be one large family, all under one family-governor; and yet many sidings and contentions in it, many parties and part-takings this way and that. The like may be said of a city, a kingdom, an army, or any such aggregate body. The like may be said even of a man himself, that hath, while he is a man, several parts united in him; but yet this living man may be sick, very sick, and even nigh to death, in a most languishing state: soul and body are still united, and several parts in the body still united with one another; but it may be some dying, some dead, all languishing at least; and, as the case is in some diseases, one member falling foul upon another, the man beating, hurting, wounding himself: the parts are still in union; but

this is a union very remote from what belongs to a sound, sober, healthy man, in good plight every way. And so the matter is with the Christian church too. We do acknowledge such a union in all the fore-mentioned things, in all things of that nature: but it is with a most scandalous and pernicious disunion. We do not think that the Spirit of God hath totally forsaken the Christian church; but it is plain, it is miserably languishing and next to death; according to the import of that expression to the Sardian church, Rev. 3. 2. Strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die. There is truth, but wrapt up in obscurity, and held in unrighteousness; as is too obvious to common observation. And therefore it is another sort of union than this is, in respect of the degree and perfection of it, that we are yet to look for; and which certainly the Spirit, when poured forth copiously and generally, (as we are encouraged to hope it will be) will effect and bring about. This union, which we are to expect, (as indeed the union, which already we have in nature and kind,) is to be both intellectual and cordial. We are to expect an improvement of it unto a much higher degree in both these kinds, a higher union both of judgment and love.

But are to expect, first, a higher intellectual union, than we hitherto find; a nearer union and agreement in mind and judgment amongst christians. And it is very unreasonable not to expect it, when we consider how plain and express the charge is concerning that kind of union: it is very unreasonable to think, that the people of God, the community of christians, shall be always in so notorious a discrepency from their rule, even in this particular case. See the solemnity of that charge, in 1 Cor. 1. 10. Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. Do we think the Christian community shall be never nearer the rule in this case, than it is? We have reason to expect it shall; and especially since we find it is so expressly foretold, that in the latter days (which this discourse we have in hand hath reference to,) one heart shall be given, and one way, Jer. 32. 39. Certainly there shall be so much agreement in minds and judgments, as shall lead the people of God all into one way; for such a word cannot fall to the ground, and is not put into the Bible to stand for a cipher there. And we have it expressly promised, that of them that are all intent to press forwards towards the same mark, and wherein they have attained, to do all to their uttermost to walk by the same rule; if in any thing they be otherwise minded,

God shall reveal this to them, Phil. 3. 15, 16. It is also expressly promised by our Lord Christ himself, that they that will do his will, shall know the doctrine whether it be of God, yea or no, John 7. 17. Certainly, when the Spirit comes to be so copiously and generally poured forth, men will be attempered more to the will of God; there will be more earnest minding and endeavouring to do his will; self-will will not be the common rule and law amongst those that bear the name of christians, as now it is: and upon this is that great promise grounded; all that is required is, "If any man will do his will, he shall know his doctrine." There is no so necessary and certain qualification for the knowledge of divine truth, as sincerity; when men do inquire for truth, not to gratify curiosity, not to serve an interest, not to keep up a party, not to promote a base design; but with sincere hearts, that they may understand what the good and acceptable will of the Lord is. They that are intent upon this, our Lord Christ will not fail them, nor break his promise, that such as will do his will, shall know the doctrine. There is a peculiar gust and relish, which the truth that is after godliness always carries in it to persons that are alive and well, and that have their senses exercised to discern between good and evil. Cannot my taste discern perverse things? saith Job, chap. 6. 30. Has not a lively christian a taste to discern some things that are obstructive and destructive to the Christian religion and the Christian interest in the world? a person alive, and with senses exercised, will taste it out; even as the new-born babe desires sincere milk, while it would refuse that which is corrupt and mixed with any thing ungrateful. Herein we are to expect much more of an intellectual union, or union in judgment concerning the great truths of God.

We are to expect, secondly, a much nearer and more inward cordial union of love. When the Spirit was more eminently poured forth upon Christ's ascension, see how it was with christians in that respect, Acts 2. 46. They continued daily with one accord in the temple. Our translation renders it too faintly; ομοθυμαδον, they met together all with one mind; so the expresssion literally signifies. And Chap. 4. 32. it is said, that believers were all of one heart and one soul. τε δε πληθες των πιστευσαντων ην καρδια και ψυχη μια. *Of the multitude that believed there was but one heart and soul*: as if they were a community, all acted and animated by one soul. However unlike itself the church of God is grown in a long tract of time, the Spirit of God is not grown unlike itself; and therefore, when it comes to be poured forth as it hath been, it will still act as it hath done, uniformly and agreeably to itself; and make them, that now are

many parties, divided and shattered, broken this way and that, all one entire piece. How passionately longing do the apostle's expressions import him to be, in reference to this one thing, that is, the union composed of the two things I have mentioned, of a union in mind and judgment, and of a closure in heart and love, in Col. 2. 1, 2. I would, that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh: that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. This is the union that he covets; and we must know, that that Spirit, who is to be the author of this union, was no doubt the author of these very desires and longings of the apostle's soul about it: it acts agreeably to itself. He desired and longed so earnestly for this, that they might be knit together both in love and understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, both the Father and the Son. And what have there been, even from the dictate and direction of the Spirit, so earnest longings for? why, though so long before, we are to account these very longings to be the earnests of the thing desired, and so to expect that whereof they are the earnest.

We thus far see, what union we are not to expect, what already is, and what we are to expect and look for farther than yet there is, or than yet we see.

Upon all this, while as yet we behold so little of so desirable a thing, we have reason to account that it is with the church of God a time of his hiding his face, and of the restraint of his Spirit. I will no more hide my face, I will pour out my Spirit. While the Spirit is not poured forth, even with reference to this blessed end and work; this is the notion which we ought to have concerning the present state of the Christian church; it is a time of God's hiding his face from them; the bright and glorious face, that hath shone upon it sometimes, and that we are to expect should shine, is yet obscured and hid. And what should our posture be upon that account? while we must reckon this the common state and case of the Christian church at this day; in what posture should our souls be; and surely,

1. It ought to be a very mournful posture. How hath he covered with a cloud in his anger the daughter of his people? how is her glory confounded? when he did decline to go with the people of Israel farther on in their way towards Canaan, saying, I will send an angel before thee, and I will drive out the Canaanite, the Amorite, &c. He shall destroy them for

you. "But I will not go up in the midst of thee, I will not go with you any further:" the people, it is said, when they heard these evil tidings, mourned, and no man did put on him his ornaments, Exod. 33. 2, 3, 4. It is a mourning time, when the bridegroom is withdrawn: and there is no sadder token, that he is withdrawn, than to behold the confusions, which have ensued in his absence.

2. It ought to be an expecting, a waiting posture. Sure this dark and gloomy night will be succeeded by a morning: it will not be a perpetual, eternal night; there will be a time, when the hid face will again appear, and the cloud remove. I will wait upon the Lord, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him, Isa. 8. 17. And it should be an earnest, desirous, longing expectation. There can be no more dismal token upon us, than to be indifferent: he is gone, his face is hid, he is not to be seen; and whether he come towards us again, whether we shall see him again any more, we matter it not; this would be the most dismal token.

SERMON XIII.*

BESIDES the principles, which the Spirit of God, when copiously and generally poured forth, will work in each individual person, tending to create a happy state of things in the church; we proposed to speak of two general effects, that must have the Christian community as such, for the subject of them, and not individual persons only, namely, union and order.

Much hath been said upon the former, the desirable effect of union. It hath been shewn, that the happiness of the church doth much depend upon this, and that it is the proper work of the Spirit of God to effect it: and then the last time we came to speak to a twofold inquiry:—to what kind of union this is to be. This we have gone through, and now proceed,

To consider, *secondly*, in what way the Spirit of God poured forth may be expected to effect this union.

And there is no doubt but it will effect it by the same means, by which it shall revive and recover religion; of which we have so largely spoken. † At the same time when it makes the Christian church a living church, it will make it one, that is, in that higher and more eminent degree, whereof we have

* Preached October 2, 1678. † See page. 256, &c.

been speaking. It is but one and the same thing, or is done *eadem opera*, the making the church more holy and the making it one: what brings christians nearer to God and Christ, will certainly and infallibly at once bring them nearer to one another. For it is manifest, that the greatest differences, that are to be found in the Christian world, lie between the godly and the ungodly, the converted and the unconverted, the sincere and the insincere: whatever differences there are amongst the people of God themselves, those are still the greatest differences which lie between them and those who are not of them; for there the disagreement is about having the Lord for our God. Every ungodly man is his own idol; he hath yet this first step to take in religion, the choosing of God alone to be his God: now the difference must needs be vast, between those that take the Lord for their God, and those that take him not, but serve a base and despicable idol, self, and make all to their very uttermost subservient unto that. The sincere and insincere differ about their last end; which is the greatest difference that can be imagined. All men's courses are shaped and directed by the ends, which they propose to themselves: and to have the Lord for our God, and to have him for our supreme and ultimate end, is all one. Now how vastly must those ways needs differ, that lead to two directly contrary ends? therefore still the greatest difference cannot but be between the godly and the earthly carnal-minded man, who hath himself for his God, and all the world, if he could compass it, for a sacrifice to his own idol, himself. Men of that temper and complexion of soul are the men that stand most off from union, and that are the greatest schismatics in all the world; it cannot but be so. Therefore, whensoever the Spirit of God poured forth shall make men agree in having the Lord for their God, this God shall be our God; when men shall become more generally sincere and thorough christians; then it cannot but be, that they shall be united with one another, and agree in far greater things than it is possible they can differ from one another in. And therefore in the forementioned, Jer. 32. 38, 39. at the same time when it is said, they shall be my people, and I will be their God; it is immediately added, And I will give them one heart and one way. This union cannot but be the result of more lively, serious religion, and of deeper impressions of godliness and of the divine image upon the souls of men. Not only as that union between the blessed persons in the Godhead is the pattern of union amongst the people of God; that they all may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, John 17. 21. But also as such a union is the certain and necessary result of other excellencies, wherein the

divine image doth consist, and wherein holy ones do and cannot but resemble God. One apostle giving an account of God, how we are to conceive of him, gives it us under these two notions, that he is light, and that he is love, 1 John 1. 5. chap. 4. 8, 16. The image of God in these two things, more generally and vividly impressed upon men, doth this whole business, makes them all one. How blessed a union would there be, when christians shall generally appear the representations of the blessed God himself in these two things, a composition, as it were, of light and love.

Therefore, to give you more distinctly the account, how or in what way the Spirit poured forth should bring about this union; it will be,—By increasing of light and knowledge amongst them that bear the Christian name every where in the world: and—By giving greater measures of grace. By the former, men shall generally come to be more knowing in things necessary to the union; and by the latter, they shall be more patient of dissent from one another in things less necessary to be known.

This will be, *first*, by an increase of light and knowledge in things more necessary to be known. I do not mean here merely notional knowledge; as the apostle doth not mean that of God, when he saith, that God is light; but I mean that knowledge received in the minds of christians, that lies in the next immediate tendency to holiness; the knowledge of the truth that is after godliness, as such, in that designed and direct tendency, as it doth attemper and dispose the minds of men unto the reception of truth as sanctifying. Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth, John 17. 17. We are bound to give thanks always to God for you,—that he hath chosen you unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, 2 Thes. 2. 13. The truth, as it lies in an immediate tendency to godliness, and is transformative of the soul into a holy and godly frame; so we must conceive it to be impressed in order to this blessed work: otherwise there wants the cement, and that which should hold hearts together, as intent and directed all towards one common design and end. And unto this purpose, we must suppose the Spirit poured forth shall heal the disaffection of men's minds unto such truth, or unto truth considered under that notion and upon that account. It hath a great work to do for this end upon the minds of men; the union that is to be brought about (as was observed upon the former head,) being necessarily intellectual first, and then cordial. It is in the mind that the first concoction of truth must be wrought, in order to a further and more perfect concoction in the heart afterwards. And whereas there is a

manifold distemperature and malady even in the minds of men, that renders them uncapable of useful, practical gospel-knowledge; the great work of the Spirit of God must be to remove and heal those infirmities and maladies of the mind, and to do it generally amongst christians; that so they may be brought to increase in the knowledge of God, in divine knowledge; as the expression is, Col. 1. 10. I might make a copious enumeration here of many such maladies and distempers in the mind, by which it becomes disaffected to truth: and which appear now to be epidemical evils, and need therefore a universal effusion of the Spirit to cure them, and so to bring about the intellectual union, of which we speak. These maladies, though some of them be in the mind itself, yet most of them are originally in the heart, and thence come to affect and distemper the mind, and render it less susceptive of useful and savoury knowledge. As,

There is an *unapprehensiveness* too generally observable in the minds of men; a dulness towards the apprehension of truth. The Spirit of God, when it comes to be generally poured forth, (as it was said to be upon the Messiah himself, on whom it was poured forth without measure, and thence to be transfused, as from a common fountain, unto all that have vital union with him,) will make men of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; as it is expressed, Isa. 11. 3.

There is a *slothful oscitancy* in the minds of most; a regardlessness and unconcernedness to know the great and deep things of God: and that causes a great disagreement and disunion in the Christian world. There are many that stint themselves: they think they know enough, and desire to know no more, and cannot endure to be out-gone by others, or that any should exceed their measure. As these latter times, with reference to which we speak, will certainly be times of very much knowledge; so they will be of very much inquiry: Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased, Dan. 12. 4. There will not be a slothful, oscitant sitting down with a present measure and attainment, but there will be a following on to know the Lord, as you have it, Hos. 6. 3. and then the promise of "his going forth shall be prepared as the morning;" as it immediately follows. There will be always new and fresh breakings forth of divine light, ready to reward the endeavour of them that seriously set themselves to inquire and seek after it.

There is very generally observable with many much *credulity*; aptness to take up reports. The simple, says Solomon, believeth every word. Prov. 14. 15. And hence it comes to pass, that every one, that can tell a plausible story, and a little set

off any fancy and novel invention of his own, makes it presently to obtain and pass for a revelation: and hence comes, as is obvious to common observation, much of that division that hath been observable in our days.

There is also, on the contrary hand, an *excessive incredulity*, or unaptness to believe things; because they are very great and glorious, and exceed the measures of our preconceptions or preconceived thoughts: the evil of which our Saviour upbraids his disciples with, that they were slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had spoken, the things contained in the divine revelation that had been made before by the prophets concerning him, Luke 24. 25.

There is *inconsideration*; an inability to consider and weigh things, to ponder and balance them as the case may require. Men are apt, rashly and without using their understandings, to take up things upon their very first appearance. It is spoken concerning these latter days, in Isaiah 32. 4. that even the heart of the rash shall understand knowledge; of those that were so, before they shall be cured of that malady. There is also an unaptness to consider, as well as an inability and indisposition to it; many times from a kind of superstitious fear, that men think they must not use their understandings to examine and search into things, that it is not yet permitted to them to do so: as if God had given men faculties, which they were not to use: they might as well be afraid to look upon an object with their eyes, and to pry into it, and to labour that way to distinguish between one thing and another.

There is, opposite to that, a certain *petulancy of mind*; when men will make it their business to tear and unravel all principles, and they must have their reason satisfied in every thing, or they will be satisfied in nothing.

There is an *injudiciousness*; an inability to conclude; after considering never so much, never so long when the balance will never be cast. So many are ever learning, and never come to the knowledge of the truth, 2 Tim. 3. 7. never conclude, never determine; but are always as children tossed to and fro.

There is, again, a certain *scepticism of mind* with a great many; that when others have stated and settled, even by common agreement and consent in the Christian church, such conclusions, yet declaim against every thing as uncertain; not only from a peculiar inability to make a judgment; but from a principle that there is no judgment to be made, and that there is nothing certain at all, or ought to be looked upon as such: which hath starved the Christian church and made it languish for a long time, as to the matter of sound knowledge.

There is *instability of judgment;* that when men have concluded and determined upon good evidence, this is true and ought to be adhered to accordingly, yet they are presently off again; and therefore are so remote from agreeing with the generality of other christians, that they are never found long to agree with themselves.

There is, as what is more directly opposite to the former, a certain kind of *obstinacy of mind*, prejudice, a fixed prepossession with corrupt and false principles, that once imbibed shall never be quitted; and which doth very frequently proceed from an enslavedness unto human dictates: that is, that they have taken some one or other to be a leader to them, and an orator; and so give away that faith, which is due only unto a divine revelation, and ought to pitch and centre there, unto the fallible judgment of a man; in direct contradiction to that rule of our Lord Christ, Call no man rabbi, call no man master upon earth, Mat. 23. 8, 10. Do not enslave your minds and judgments to any man.

It must be supposed, that whenever the Spirit of God doth that blessed work in the world, to revive and recover religion and Christianity, it will unite christians even by this means, the curing of these great maladies and distempers, that are in the minds of men so generally, and by which they are rendered indisposed and averse to the entertainment and retention of sound gospel-knowledge. For this Spirit, where it is given, is the spirit of a sound mind, 2 Tim. 1. 7. The word, that is rendered soundness of mind there, σωφρονισμος, *signifies sobriety*, a spirit of sobriety. Indeed that word doth commonly misguide men; and they apply it unto a thing far inferior in nature and dignity unto that which it truly signifies; as if it were to be opposed only to gross sensual wickedness. But sobriety, as the very notation of the word doth import, hath its seat and subject in the mind, and doth firstly and chiefly affect that. A sound mind and a sober mind is all one. Till the Spirit of God do in these several respects cure men's minds, it is impossible there should be union or agreement; unless men do agree only in being diseased; or (which would not do the business neither,) unless they could agree all to be in one disease, which would be a very unhappy union also. When therefore the Spirit of the living God shall universally come forth upon men, and create the world christians, and create the Christian world a region of light; when it shall generally make men apprehensive, inquiring, serious, considerate, judicious, lovers of the truth even for itself, sincere, so as to entertain truth with no other design than only that the life of godliness may be promoted and served by it; there cannot but then be in

a very great degree the happy union obtaining amongst christians, whereof we have spoken.

But yet, when all this is done, we cannot suppose by it, that men should be brought to know all things; but still there will be many things, wherein they cannot but remain ignorant, and consequently dissent and differ in many things from one another.

Therefore the Spirit of God poured forth must be supposed also to effect this union, *secondly*, by making christians more generally patient of dissent from one another, in less necessary things which they may not still so generally know. And, if we consider, what the genuine operations of the blessed Spirit of God are, and what kind of Spirit that is wherever it comes to obtain; this cannot but be the general temper of christians, when that Spirit shall be eminently poured forth; that they shall be very patient of dissent from one another in things wherein they continue to dissent.

For, we must suppose, first, that the Spirit being generally so poured forth, there will be a greater ability to distinguish between truths that are of Scripture-revelation, and those that are not; and consequently which it is matter of duty to believe, and which not. For undoubtedly there is to be such a distinction made between truth and truth, as any one may easily see at the first view. For we must know, that a thing is not therefore the necessary object of my assent, because it is true; but because it is evident, or because it is credible; either evident in itself, or recommended as credible to me by the authority of him that doth reveal it. I am not bound therefore to believe a thing immediately, because it is in itself true; for that it may be, and yet I have no means to know it to be so, but then is the obligation inferred upon me to believe such a thing, when it is clothed with sufficient evidence to recommend itself unto my understanding. And whereas there are some things that God hath revealed, even all things that are any ways necessary either to the being or the well-being of religion; I must consider those things that lie not within the compass of that revelation, as what God hath left unto men *in medio;* he has left them undetermined, and so they may be matter of very innocent disagreement, of discourse and decertation, without any concernedness, on the one part or the other.

Amongst revealed truths, we may suppose men will, secondly, be enabled to distinguish between the greater and the less, between those that are more necessary and less necessary.

We must suppose, thirdly, christians then to be generally more spiritual, and apt to be taken up more with the great

things of religion; and less apt to be greatly and deeply concerned about matters of less consequence, so as to disturb and break the order and peace of the church upon the account of them.

We must, fourthly, suppose them then to be more holy: less opinionative, less conceited and humoursome; which is that kind of knowledge that the apostle doth oppose to love, as not only unedifying, but destructive of edification, 1 Cor. 8. 1, &c. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, if he knows with a conceited reflection upon his own knowledge, admiring himself upon account of it; he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know. Ignorance is better than his knowledge. Men will think more meanly of themselves and their own judgments, and either more highly or more charitably of other men; either think, that possibly they may see that which themselves see not; or if they cannot apprehend so, yet at least that the men are sincere and upright-hearted towards God; as it is meet for them to judge, and not to be insolently censorious of such as do in such or such little matters differ from them; not to attribute to perverseness of mind every man's dissention of opinion from their own.

They must needs, fifthly, be supposed to be more compassionate unto those, whom they suppose to know less than themselves; as knowing, that there are many things which themselves are ignorant of, and they shall never attain to know all things as long as they live. There are still all the genuine workings of the Spirit of God, so far as it obtains and prevails over the spirits of men; and so this among the rest.

Christians will undoubtedly then, sixthly, be formed unto a more awful and reverential subjection to God's own prescribed rules, concerning the boundaries and terms of Christian communion. Men will not then dare to make terms of their own to limit the communion of christians as such; to devise new terms which Christ was never the author of, and will never own: but the authority of such a law will obtain in the hearts of christians, that are become so serious and subject to the authority of God as they must then be supposed to be, so as that they will extend their communion as far as it can be judged that God will extend his, and Christ will extend his. For that is the measure, that is given us, in these two passages. In one place it is said, Rom. 14. 1, 3. Receive such a one, for God hath received him: receive him for all his doubting, for all his difference from you: and why? because the Lord hath received him. In the other place it is thus expressed, chap. 15. 7. Receive ye one another, as Christ hath received

us, to the glory of God. God receives such a one into his communion; and shall not I receive him into mine? Christ receives such a one, even unto the glory of the Father; and shall not I receive him into my fellowship? when once the spirits of men come to be awed into a subjection unto the divine authority in this thing, so as to reckon it profane to prescribe bounds and terms unto Christian communion, other than God and Christ have prescribed themselves; then no doubt will this blessed effect obtain and take place in the Christian church, then will it become an entire united thing, one thing within itself, and never till then. As long as we must have terms of Christian communion of men's own devising, according to the different humours of men, they will still vary, and so we shall never know where to be.

Thus we have considered that first effect to be expected from the Spirit generally poured forth, in order to promote the peaceful state of the church, namely, the union of christians amongst themselves *. I would add something concerning another particular mentioned, as conducive also to the same peaceful state.

(ii.) Order is another blessed effect to be looked for from the pouring out of the Spirit, and that belongs unto the Christian community as a community, and is most necessary unto the making up of that happy time and state of things, whereof we have been speaking. It is very plain, that this superadds somewhat unto union. It is a bad union, where there is not order. Union speaks the compactiveness of parts; order the due situation of them, that every one be in that place which duly belongs to it. Suppose there were never so much union in the parts of the natural body, but the eyes were placed where the ears should be, and the hands where the feet should be; notwithstanding all the union of parts, the lack of order would make this thing uncomfortable to itself, and deformed and monstrous in the view of others. There are many members in one and the same body; and these members have all their distinct place and use and purpose that they serve for, as the apostle at large discourses, 1 Cor. 12. Now the Spirit of God cannot be poured forth, but it will infer a comely order in the Christian church: by the same operation by which it gives it life, it will give it shape and comeliness, and a due figure and disposition of parts within itself. It was well said concerning this matter by a worthy person; "God will certainly not be wanting in point of shape and comely order to a church, that hath a principle of life within itself." He that clothes lilies, and gives life unto the sensitive creatures, and gives them their

* See page 321.

own proper shape also ; will no doubt do so unto the lively body of his own Son : he will never be wanting to it in point of shape and comely order, when it comes to be a lively vigorous thing : by how much the fuller of life, so much certainly the order will be the more comely and pleasant, by its own choice, and much more as directed by his rules. To evince this, consider these several things.

[i.] The Spirit poured forth comes to be, in them that receive it, as a certain kind of nature ; it is called the divine nature. Nature, you know, acts uniformly and orderly in all its operations. How regular are the courses of nature ? how constant the returns of days and nights, of summer and winter ? how strictly do all the species and kinds of things keep all their own kind, retain their properties, colours, virtues, ways and methods of operation ? The Spirit of God, working (as it is received in the hearts of christians,) even as a certain kind of nature, must needs work uniformly ; and so have a steady tendency to the begetting and keeping up of order in the whole community, that shall be aggregated by it.

[ii.] It cannot be, but that, by how much the Spirit doth more obtain and shall be generally poured forth amongst men, each one will be more peculiarly adapted and fitted to the business of his own station, so as that he will thereupon choose that as fittest for him.

[iii.] It cannot be, but that all men will be more debased and humbled, and equal estimators of themselves and therefore apprehend not themselves fit for a station, unto which they are not called.

[iv.] The Spirit poured forth will no doubt make men more generally apprehensive of, and reverentially subject to the authority of God himself, in all his own ordinances and appointments : and therefore, where one is to teach, and others to be taught ; some to govern, others to be governed ; the authority, that doth design men unto more public stations and capacities, will be considered as divine. We notionally know so much already ; but it will be another thing, when that impression is made upon the hearts of christians ; "He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God."

[v.] The Spirit poured forth cannot be without making men generally very tender of the community, unto which they belong ; and of the whole Christian community in general : as every one can easily apprehend, how this would be prejudiced, if order be broken, and men commonly allow themselves the liberty to step out of their own ranks and stations, to be and do what they are not called to be or do.

The concurrence of these things cannot but infer, that whenever the Spirit of God shall be generally poured forth, the

Christian church will fall into order: there will need no great hammering in reference to that, the business will even do of itself. All will know, and all will mind their own stations and the business of them; and apprehend their own unfitness for any station, unto which God doth not call; and apprehend their privilege in not being so called, in being exempt from the number and burden of more public stations: as certainly exemption, if it were understood, is a very great privilege; when God doth not lay any farther charge upon me, than only to intend the business of a narrower station and a lesser sphere; when I can be vacant unto God, and for his commerce, and there walk with him undisturbly within my own line; while others are eaten up with cares and solicitudes concerning the common affairs, that they are concerned in, and intrusted with the management of. No doubt the Spirit of God will help every man to make a true judgment of things, when it comes to be generally poured forth: and this, that hath been just spoken of, cannot but be judged; because it is a very great privilege to have freedom and vacancy for the proper business of a christian as such, within his own calling and verge; when God shall, as it were providentially, say unto a man, "I lay no other charge upon thee, but to walk with me in thy own station and within the bounds of thy own calling, to make me the entire object of thy love and delight, and at all times to solace thyself with me; I exempt thee from things, that would disturb and disquiet and divert from the business and delights of such a continued course of walking with me." When this comes to be generally understood, there will be little disposition in the minds of men to break order, by usurping upon what belongs not to them.

Thus far you see, that little else can be thought needful to the bringing about of a very happy time and state of things, besides the pouring forth of the Spirit.

SERMON XIV*.

WE have been shewing in many discourses, what a good state of things or happy times are to be brought about by the Spirit of God poured forth. And hitherto we have been endeavouring at large to evince the efficacy and sufficiency of this means to the end mentioned; which was the first thing † undertaken to be made evident. We are now to proceed to shew—

2. The *necessity* of this means to reach such an end: that as it is a *sufficient* means, you may also understand it to be the *only* means, of bringing such a work about. And for evincing this, two things, clear enough in themselves, seem abundantly sufficient; namely,—that nothing can mend the world, but what mends the spirits of men: and,—that nothing can effectually do that but the Spirit of the Lord poured forth. These are things that shine into our minds and understandings with their own light.

(1). As to the *former*; What else do we think can mend the times, but what mends men's spirits? doth not every thing necessarily act and work just as it is? how can the posture of the world come to be other than at present, if the active principles of men's spirits continue the same?

* Preached September 18th. 1678. † See page 256.

(2.) And as to the *latter;* What besides the Spirit of God can effectually mend the spirits of men, so as to make the state of things thoroughly and generally better?

What other cause can be *universal* enough, and spread its influence far and wide, to make a better world? There wants a cause in this case, that can diffuse and influence a vast way. That a nation should be born in a day, that the earth should be filled with the knowledge of God, that there should be new heavens and a new earth; this needs a cause that can work every where: and what else can do this but the Spirit of the Lord? And again,

What other cause is *potent* enough, of sufficient energy, of virtue piercing and penetrative enough, to do such a work as must be done upon the spirits of men, before the state of things will come to be better? what else can shiver rocks, and melt down mountains, and make rough places plain? what else, do you think, can dissolve adamantine hearts, subdue insolent passions, assuage and mortify furious lusts? what else can change men's natures, transform the very habit of their minds, and make them generally quite other men, other creatures, than they have been? unto what agent inferior to this can we attribute the ability to create? New heavens and a new earth are to be created, Isa. 65. 17. You know how they were created at first: "By faith we understand, that the worlds were created by the word of God." The heavens and the earth were the products of the breath of his mouth, with all that is contained in them: so must the spiritual creation be, as much as the natural. What, do we think, can make all the violences and mischiefs to cease out of the earth, that fill it with continual tragedies every where, and more or less at all times? Nothing is more evident, than that the Spirit of the Lord alone is a cause proportionable to such an expected effect.

And the matter will be yet more evident, if you do but consider these two things together.

[1.] That the spirits of men are most horribly depraved, and wickedly bent in themselves to such things as tend to nothing but destruction and calamity. It is said of men universally, that destruction and misery are in their ways. Rom. 3. 16.

[2.] That all these wicked inclinations of men's spirits are continually fostered and fomented by another spirit distinct from their's, and over and beside their's. The spirit that worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience, (Eph. 2. 2.) makes the world and the church miserable, so far as it prevails. Now what can we oppose to that spirit, but the Spirit of the living God? While that spirit is the great tormenter and disturber of the world, that disquiets all things, that sets the spi-

rits of men on work against God and against one another every where, that hath deluged the world with an inundation of wickedness: what but the Spirit of the Lord can lift up a standard against it?

But that the apprehension of this matter may yet settle and fix more deeply with us; (for it is of great concernment that it should do so, that we may know whither to direct our eye;) let us but enumerate a little all the probable means besides that we can think of, which might make the times good; and think, how inefficacious and altogether to no purpose they would be, without the Spirit of the Lord poured forth and working with mighty efficacy every where upon the spirits of men.

First, Think, what the preaching of the gospel would do. That, it must be supposed, will be very general, far more general than it is, to bring about such a state of things as we expect and hope for, before time end. But, alas! what would preaching do, if we could suppose it never so general, while the Spirit of the living God restrains and withholds his influences? Indeed it is not to be supposed, that there could be a general preaching of the gospel amongst men, without the mighty work of the Spirit of God to prepare the way: but if there were, to how little purpose is our preaching, where that Spirit works not? We may as well attempt to batter strong walls with the breath of our mouths, as to do good upon men's souls without the Spirit of God. If there were preachers every where, that could "speak with the tongues of men and of angels," what would it signify? "Do I persuade men?" saith the apostle. Alas! it is above us to persuade men; it is a matter of very great difficulty in things that are but of common concernment. How hard to alter the mind and will of a man, once set and bent already upon this or that thing of a secular nature, that hath reference only to earthly affairs! The heathens themselves have been taught by that light that hath shone amongst them, to attribute unto a Deity the business of persuading men, to acknowledge it a *numen* that ever comes to have a persuasive power over men's minds. When the Son of God himself was the preacher, how little was effected, till the time came of the Spirit's being so copiously poured forth? He that spake, his enemies being judges, so as never man spake! into whose lips grace was poured forth! his hearers wondering at the gracious words that proceeded from his mouth! astonished sometimes at his doctrine! for they could distinguish, and see, that he taught with authority, and not as the scribes: yet how little was done! All ended in the martyrdom of the preacher, and not long after in the destruction of the people for

the greatest part. When that Spirit was poured forth, then thousands at a sermon were subdued and brought under by the power of the gospel: but it was not yet given in that plentiful measure, while as yet Jesus was not glorified. And if it had not been given upon Jesus's glorification, what could have enough fortified the hearts of these poor disciples, to undertake the converting of the world, the going to teach all nations, to proselyte mankind? How much, how unspeakably too big had such an attempt appeared for their undertaking, if a mighty Spirit had not come forth to raise them above themselves, to make them somewhat beyond men! How could they ever have thought of going about such a thing as that, wherein they were to be and actually were the successful instruments? Without it, what success could have been hoped for, howsoever attempted? Possibly it may be thought, that human endeavours might have done much at least towards the proselyting of mankind to the Christian profession: so much might have been discovered of the reasonableness of that religion, as that it might have been thought fit, somewhat generally, so far as men could be dealt with, to entertain and embrace the Christian name. Truly even that was very unlikely; that it should have been ordinarily in the power of any rhetorick or of any reason, generally to persuade men to forsake a religion, wherein they had been bred and born, and which was delivered down to them from their forefathers, whether Jews or Pagans: it was very unlikely, that mere argument should prevail so far on the world. But suppose it did,

Secondly, Consider, what mere nominal Christianity would do to the bettering of the world. What doth it now to the bettering of the state of things, where it obtains? Wherein are the nominal christians better than other men? wherein are they better towards God and Christ? The case is apparent, that though atheism and infidelity be conquered in men's minds and understandings by the strength of reason or of education, yet still the stronger fort in the heart remains inexpungable, till the Spirit of the living God comes to deal effectually with the hearts of men: and so that consequently there is as great enmity against God and Christ, even in the Christian world as out of it. And wherein are men better in Christendom towards one another, than the pagans and mahometans are? wherein better? where is there more deceit and fraud, more enmity and malice, more oppression and cruelty, than amongst the nominal christians? If we take true measures of the Christian religion, and apprehend it to be what indeed it is; if we will say, that it is faith in God through Christ, or devotedness to God through Christ; or if we will say, that it doth consist,

as no doubt in very great part it doth, in an imitation of Christ, in being like-minded to Christ in purity, heavenliness, spirituality, in self-denial, meekness, patience, peaceableness, aptitude to do good all that ever we can: if this be the Christian religion, we may confidently say, that Christianity hath not more bitter enemies in all the world than professed christians: I wish we could not say so. And where throughout this world have there ever been more bloody wars, fierce commotions, dreadful ruins and devastations, than amongst christians? Therefore think, how little towards the bettering of the world and mending of the times, nominal Christianity doth or can do without the Spirit of God: the world is filled with plagues notwithstanding, and whatsoever tends to make it miserable, in those very parts where that obtains. But then,

Thirdly, It may be supposed, that these very judgments themselves might effect somewhat to the purpose, to calm and subdue men's spirits, and so bring about a more sedate and composed state of things at last. And most true indeed it is, that they are very apt means to that purpose. But means, you must still remember, are but means, and suppose an agent that is to use them; as a sword will not cut without a hand to manage it, and a proportionable hand. The inhabitants of the world should learn righteousness, when God's judgments are abroad in the earth, Isa. 26. 9. But do they? Do not we all know that nations, countries, towns, cities, may more easily be ruined than reformed, more easily be harassed and crushed all to pieces than purged? Do we need instances? We cannot find a more bright one than the nearest to ourselves, to our own view. If we do but cast an eye upon this very city, it hath been wasted by judgment upon judgment: think what the plague hath done, what the fire hath done, what poverty invading as an armed man here and there hath done. Is the city more reformed? grown more pious and serious? doth the life of religion appear more in it? is it become more sober and just? Let this be seriously considered, and then think, what even judgments themselves, as severe as can be thought, are like to effect in the world without the Spirit poured forth. You have heard enough of the commotions and hurries of the world in other parts; but do you hear of its being grown much better even in those parts? And admit that such judgments should sober men's spirits generally, and reduce them to more calmness, that men should by very weariness be at length brought to be at rest, and so a peaceable and prosperous state of things ensue: yet what would that alone do to make the times good?

Fourthly, What I say, would a prosperous state of things do

(meaning it only of external prosperity) to better the condition of the church of God? Such a good state of things for the church, must, as hath been said, first and in the principle place consist in the flourishing of religion, and then but secondarily in external tranquillity. What would the latter of these do without the former? and what would become of the former without the Spirit poured forth? If we had never so happy times in external respects, what would be the issue of it, in reference to the state and condition of the church of God? We should then have, as was noted of old, golden chalices and wooden priests: the church would be a glorious sepulchre, splendid without, but full of rottenness and corruption within. Would this better our case? It is very plain, that there could be nothing more beside the purpose of mending the state of the church, than prosperity without a great measure of the Spirit. It would be good in subserviency, nothing in substitution: it might serve the Spirit, but cannot supply its place: much might be done under the management of the Spirit by such a state of things towards the promoting and furthering of religion; but without that Spirit all would go to ruin: religion would soon languish away and come to nothing, the sun of external prosperity would exhale the life and spirit and vigour of it; as experience has often shewn that it has done heretofore. And what external prosperity can there be, while the minds of men are so very various, divided into varieties of parties this way and that? There cannot be a prosperous state, while only one party is uppermost, and all the rest under oppression. When the church of God hath been in so divided a condition, have you ever known or read or heard of any such state of things, that hath been so favourable, as to deserve to be called a prosperous state? If it hath been favourable to some, yet it hath, it may be, been equally or more unfavourable unto very many, that perhaps were better men than those whom the times smiled upon. And so it cannot but still be, where there are many parties: every party cannot be uppermost: and unless the Spirit of God new mould men's spirits, whatever party were uppermost, they would make it their business to crush and vex and disquiet all the rest. And can that be a state fit to be called prosperous? But

Fifthly, That, which the minds of many may be apt to run upon, is, that some very exact form of government in the church would be the specific, or rather the *pampharmacon*, to cure all diseases in the church of God, and make a very happy time. A frame of things exactly squared according to their apprehension, they think, would soon do the business. The minds of many are apt to run much upon this project. But most

forms, that can be thought on, have been tried; and what have they done, while the Spirit of God hath not animated the external form? or what hope remains, that any thing could be done by an external lifeless form, if never so excellent and unexceptionable, never so agreeable to rule? The expectation, that that would do the business, is, as if a person were dangerously and extremely sick, even next to death, and any should go about to trim him up and dress him neatly, put on him a well made suit, and expect that should effect his cure. Alas! what needs there amongst us such curiosity for a dead thing? We are dead, the Spirit of God is retiring, retired in a very great degree: to what purpose would it be to shape and figure a dead thing this way or that? Just to as much purpose, as the endeavour of him that we read of in Plutarch, who would fain erect a newly dead body in the posture of a living man; but alas! the legs yielded, the hands fell, the head dropped on one side; so that the poor defeated person was forced to cry out at last, "*Deest aliquid intus*, I find there is something wanting within: there wants a living soul to support and animate the frame." So it must be in our case too, if there were ever so exact order. You may suppose from what was formerly said, that order is a most excellent and desirable thing, and necessary to the prosperity of the church of God. But what is the order and frame of a thing that is dead? If a plot of ground should be laid out for a garden; square it never so accurately, let it have never so exact a figure, bestow upon it every thing of ornament that art can invent; yet if nature also do not do its part, if the sun never shine upon it, if no showers or dews ever descend, would it be, think you, a pleasant flourishing garden? We have all of us reason to have done expecting much from lifeless outward forms, even the best constitution imaginable: while a spirit of life from above breathes not, despair that that will ever work miracles, or do any great things amongst us.

Besides, the best form of things that can be supposed, that is, such as would be more serviceable than others unto the ends and purposes which would be aimed at, to depress wickedness and keep things composed and in order, could never last long, if a Spirit from God do not animate it. Lust and wickedness, which it goes about to curb, and which might be less in some external fruits of it, so long as it should continue curbed, yet would grow too strong and break the bonds. As you know, that, let the body of a man be never so comely and beautiful and well proportioned, yet all that excellent structure and fabrick will soon dissolve after death; beauty is gone all of a sudden, ghastliness succeeds in the room of it, and in time it

will corrupt and putrify within; and that corruption will break forth, so as to break the external frame and cause part to drop from part. Therefore never expect a mere external frame of things to better our case much or long, to do any miracles in that kind. And I may add, as that leads me,

Sixthly, That indeed the very power of working miracles itself, which is but an external means, would not better the world and men's spirits, without the Spirit of God accompanying. It is true indeed they could not be wrought without that Spirit in the agent; but that would not do without the Spirit as a diffused soul. Many may be ready to imagine, that if God would but do some very strange things amongst men, work many astonishing wonders, fill the world and the time with prodigies; then, whereas his memorial is in so great part extinct, these things would effectually convince men of their atheism and infidelity, and so all would be set right. But what did miracles do with the Jews of old? who were brought out of Egypt by a succession of miracles, by plague upon plague inflicted on the land of Egypt, till they were constrained to let Israel go! who were brought through the red sea by a most astonishing miracle, the sea dividing on the one hand and on the other, and their enemies pursuing destroyed, only by withdrawing that miraculous power, and letting the sea unite again! who were led through the wilderness by a continual miracle, the pillar of cloud and fire; and fed by another, manna, bread from heaven! who had the great God himself appearing with so stupendous a glory upon mount Sinai; speaking with the voice of words, that six hundred thousand might hear at once, the law, the ten words! yet the body of that people lapse into idolatry, while the divine glory was in view before their eyes, and after it had been by so dreadful a voice immediately before, forbidden with the utmost severity. And their after-ingratitude, infidelity, mutinies, rebellions, murmurings, testify how little miracles did amongst them. How little did they do in Christ's time? those that he himself wrought? restoring hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind, and speech to the dumb, and life to the dead? how little was effected, save only to heighten and aggravate the wickedness which shewed itself so invincible? All these are *external* things.

But if we should think of what is internal too; the common notions of religion; the practical dictates of natural conscience, that do more or less obtain every-where amongst men; the light and knowledge, that comes by the gospel-discovery, where that obtains; common prudence, and respect to self-interest: how little do these things do towards the composing of

the world and the bettering of the times? It is plain, that light is more easily extinguished than lust. When it comes to a contest, when there is a competition between corruption and conscience; alas! how much more intent are men to mortify their consciences, than to mortify their corruptions? How feeble and impotent a thing is their light! All the light that shines doth but testify against them, rather than direct or reform them; and will do no more, till the almighty Spirit go forth. And for that of prudence and respect to interest, that is the very thing that undoes men; that is, that every man will be prudent for himself, and mind a particular interest of his own; this fills the world with tumults and blood, with mischiefs and miseries every-where: so that, that which should be men's preserver, is their destroyer, even self-love.

The sum of all is this. This ought to make us despair, that ever we shall see a better world and state of things, till this blessed Spirit be poured down upon our heads. Without that, things will be growing worse and worse; it cannot be but they will do so: do not we see, that they have done so? The Spirit is in a great measure gone, retired even from Christian assemblies. When do we hear of the conversion of a soul, of any stricken and pierced to the heart by the word of God? And what is that like to come to, think we? what would it come to in this city, if always in a continued course the burials should exceed the births? Must it not be the very desolation of all at last? If we should speak of burials in a moral sense; alas! doth the number of converts equal the number of apostates? But take it in a natural sense, as all are dying; do we think, that there are christians brought in, serious christians, effectually become so, in any proportionable number to the deaths of good people amongst us? What doth this tend to, but the extinction of religion? And not to speak of the rampant wickedness of those who have cast off all sense and fear of God and godliness, but only how those who profess religion degenerate and grow worse and worse; it is very dismal to think, how coldly affected they are towards religion, towards the ordinances of it, towards the divine presence; how eagerly they fly at the world, when the clouds gather so thick and black, and all things seem to conspire to a storm: their ordinary business, all their business must go on just as it did, except that of souls, except that for eternity and another world; which must be neglected, as it was wont to be. Is not this the case? If there be opportunities of solemn prayer, of mourning and fasting, of putting in for a part and share of the expected mercy; how do many, if we may not say the most of them that profess religon amongst us, as it were disclaim their part? for

they will bear no part amongst them that cry for mercy. Think, what this will come to, if the Spirit of the living God be still withheld, and do not awaken men, and reduce their spirits to a better state. Despised ordinances, contemned worship, neglected seasons and opportunities of grace, how dreadful a testimony will they bear in the consciences of many, if once light should come to be extinguished amongst us, and all the frame of things, wherein they seem to take comfort, should be dissolved and shattered in pieces!

SERMON XV.*

IT remains now to make some improvement of so great and important a subject, as we have been upon—The dependance of the happy state of the church of God upon the pouring forth of his Spirit:—which shall be in certain practical notes or corollaries, that are deducible from the whole of what hath been opened to you. And we shall begin, where we ended at the close of the last discourse.

1. Since the happiness of the church doth so immediately and necessarily depend upon a pouring forth of the Spirit; it must needs be of very dreadful import, when that Spirit retires; when there is a manifest suspension of its light and influence. Every gradual retraction of that Spirit speaks a vergency to death, to a total dissolution; as if the whole frame of the church were ready to drop asunder. It is a dismal thing, when that which is the only light and life of it retires, visibly withdraws; when that Spirit breathes not as it hath done through the world, souls are not born by it unto God in a proportion to what hath been; considering, that this is the only way of entering into God's kingdom, either in the initial or consummate state of it, the kingdom of grace or the kingdom of glory. It is a dismal thing, when conversions are grown rare, and infe-

* Preached October 16, 1678.

rior in number to apostacies: when christians are not born so fast as they die, whether in the moral sense, or in the natural; for all die alike. This ought to be considered as a thing of dreadful import, when the Spirit works not as he hath been wont, for the rescuing of souls out of a precedent death: and farther, when those that live, languish; and much more, when death insensibly creeps on them that have but a name to live: as you know it doth with many languishing persons, seizing one limb first and then another, so that the man is dead while he is alive. With how many is it so, that have lost themselves either in the cares or pleasures of this world, and are dead while they live? This it becomes us to consider as a most melancholy case. If all the happiness and weal of the church depend upon the pouring out of the Spirit, how dreadful is it, when there is a discernible retraction!

2. All our hope of good lying in the pouring forth of the Spirit, it is very strange, that the retraction of it should not be considered with more sense; that we are not more apprehensive of so dismal a case as that is. It is a case exceeding gloomy in itself, as hath been said; but how strange is it, that we should so little understand and consider it as such! that this should be our danger, lest God should be quite gone from amongst us before we know it! that life is retiring, but we perceive it not! Alas! with too many there is scarce life enough left to feel themselves die, or light enough to perceive that darkness is gathering upon them. Strange, that men should be dying, and say they are alive! Light is diminishing and blindness increasing and growing upon them, yet they say they see well, and carry it as if nothing ailed them! This is a strange infatuation upon the minds of men, even of the professors of religion in our time: we keep up our wonted course while we can, our wonted forms and ways of worship; we assemble as we have been accustomed to do, we have praying and preaching and other ordinances of the gospel: but there is not the wonted Spirit, such appearances and demonstrations of the power and presence of the Spirit as formerly, and yet we seem not aware of it. We do as we have been wont at other times; but we find it not with our souls in what we do, as christians were used to find it: as it is said of that mighty man Samson; he said, I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself, but he wist not that the Lord was departed from him, Judg. 16. 20. So, we seem not to know that the Lord is departing, but say we will do as at other times: indeed we reach not him; he said he would go forth and shake himself as at other times; we do not that, but as the complaint is in Isa. 64. 7. so is our case; There is none (scarce any,) that stir

up themselves to take hold of God; for, as it there follows, he hath hid his face from us and consumed us, we are consuming, because of our iniquities. We are pining away, but not aware of it: grey hairs are here and there upon us, but we seem not to know it. We read concerning men in general in the dying hour, Eccl. 8. 8. No man hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death. When the soul must dislodge and be gone, no man can hold it; but they would if they could, men are loth to die; they would retain the spirit longer, if it were any way in their power: what strivings and strugglings for breath are there in dying men? but there seems with us hardly to be so much as that, "Oh that we could retain the Spirit of life and grace!" It is not indeed in our power, any more than to retain the departing, dislodging soul, when the hour is come that it must be gone: but it is strange, that we should not be filled with complaint, that we should cross what is so common as to be a proverb; every thing would live, but it seems so would not we. When God as it were says to us by what he doth, (the most emphatical way of speaking,) "My Spirit shall not always strive," it shall no longer strive; for it is actually withheld from striving; yet we dread not this greatest of all threats, and when the threatening is enforced by a gradual execution, an execution already in a dreadful degree: not to be afraid what this will come to, is very strange.

3. We further collect, that such a dismal state of things is likely immediately to forego the more eminent effusion of the Spirit, and the shining of the light of God's face, here spoken of. When the time approaches, concerning which the text speaks, then a most dismal gloominess and darkness must be expected to precede. That is plainly implied, when it is said, "I will no more hide my face:" I have done it hitherto, but will not do it any more: it bespeaks, that till the time of this eminent effusion there was a very displeased hiding of God's face, and a great retraction and holding back of the Spirit. Other scriptures, that relate as I conceive to the same eminent season, intimate also a dreadful foregoing desolation. The prophet Isaiah (chap. 32.) describes the desolation of the Christian church, (for I doubt not his prediction is ultimately meant of that,) by the emblem of the land of Israel's lying waste, and the great city, the metropolis being all ruined, the very houses of joy in the joyous city covered over with briars and thorns, ver. 13. 14. And thus it is said it should be, ver. 15. Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high; then the wilderness shall be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest; that which was before reckoned a fruitful field, shall

now seem to have been but a wild forest, in comparison of the fruitfulness it shall now arrive at by the effusion of the Spirit. So that great pouring of it forth, in Ezek. 37. meant no doubt of the same time with this in the text, is preceded by such a forlorn and desolate state of the church, that it is represented by the emblem of a slaughtered army covering all the ground about with the dead carcasses, till the Spirit of life enter into them, bring bone to bone, cover them with flesh, and form them all into a regular army of living men again, ver. 1.—14. It imports, that almost a universal death, next to total, will be upon the church before this happy day. And do not we seem in a tendency thither? we seem to be descending gradually into the dark shady vale, the region of darkness and of death: nor must we expect it to be silent darkness; no doubt it will rather imitate that of hell, a region turbid as well as dark. A night seems approaching, that will be equally stormy and gloomy; for it is the season of God's anger. It is never to be thought, that he will be neutral towards us; if he be not a friend, he will be an enemy; when he ceases to be our light and life and hope and joy, it cannot be but he must become an astonishing terror. "Be not a terror unto me, thou art my hope;" says the prophet, Jer. 17. 17. When he is not the one, he must be the other. Are we prepared to meet him in such a way and in such a time? It cannot but be a dreadful time, the time of managing his controversy: when he hideth his face in displeasure, that is not all, it is not a bare hiding. Observe the passage in Deut. 31. 17. "Then my anger shall be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them, and I will hide my face from them, and they shall be devoured, and many evils and troubles shall befall them:" and what then? It follows, "So that they will say in that day, Are not these evils come upon us, because our God is not amongst us? and I will surely hide my face in that day;" as it follows again in ver. 18. This is to make a way for wrath; and when you can see him no longer, you shall hear from him in a most terrible way.

The case of the Christian church seems to be as Israel was represented, in Psal. 106. 35. &c. They were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works: and they served their idols, which were a snare unto them. And, ver. 39. Thus they were defiled with their own works; (now they are called their own, since they had adopted them, and so made them their own;) and went a whoring with their own inventions. What follows there, and what may we expect to follow in the like case? "For this the Lord abhorred his own inheritance." ver. 40. Now take them who will, they are an abomination to

the Lord, he seems to care no more for them. As to the former part, is not this manifestly our case; the Christian religion is in great part become paganish. We lately shewed, how little good nominal Christianity doth to the world, where that only doth obtain. How plain is it, that Christianity hath let in paganism unto a dreadful degree! And now, when the time of controversy comes, the day of recompence and year of vengeance, which is in God's heart, how terrible a day will that be! When that day comes, that shall burn as an oven, and all the hemisphere as it were of the church be as a fiery vault! when the Lord shall bathe his sword in heaven, as the expression is in Isa. 34. 5. as it were drench it with vivid celestial fire, that it may pierce like lightning! when he shall whet his glittering sword, lift up his hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever, I will render vengeance to mine enemies: (Deut. 32. 40, 41.) when he shall set himself to contest with the Antichristian spirit, that hath lurked under the assumed and injurious pretence and profession of the Christian name; the apostatical, the worldly spirit, that hath entered into the church, and wrought in it with such malignity: that spirit of envy, malice, hatred, bitterness; that prophane, atheistical spirit; that spirit of hypocrisy and formality! when he shall come to a direct contest and grapple with all among whom that spirit dwells and rules; how can we think but that will be a very dreadful day? And do we know how near it is? May it not for ought we know be ever at hand? May we not be upon the very borders of that turbid darkness, in which all the rage of hell shall play its part, the spirits of men be let loose, the devils not yet bound and ready to do their uttermost, when they know their time is short; the very hour and power of darkness, when all things shall conspire to make the church a chaos and place of confusion, when the elements shall be as it were commissioned to fight one another, and the powers of heaven shall shake? How are we prepared, in what posture to enter into such a state as that is? It is a dismal thing to live a winter, a continual night, in such a place as you have heard Greenland to be: one would not do it, unless unavoidable necessity drove; and if one must, he would make provision for such a winter-night all that he could. How then are we provided for such a time?

4. We may note again hence, how adorable the power and greatness of that Spirit is, that can turn such a chaos, such a state of darkness and horror and confusion, into light and peace, into life and beauty, into harmony and glory. How adorable is that Spirit! how great and glorious should it be in our eyes upon that account! Let us use our thoughts as much as we

will, we cannot make a too gloomy representation of the time just spoken of, wherein the Lord's face shall be hid, and the Spirit withheld. But when we have dwelt in the contemplation of the sadness and dismalness of that time awhile, then what cause have we, and what advantage thence to take our rise to greaten and heighten our thoughts concerning this blessed Almighty Spirit, that can make so happy a change as soon as it comes forth, as soon as the divine light shines again? What a change will it be! Amidst all those calamities that the church complains of, (psalm 80.) see where they apprehend the redress to be. Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved; which is repeated no less than three times in this psalm ver. 3, 7, 19. We are cured all of a sudden, all things are redressed, if thou do but turn us and cause thy face to shine. How soon doth the appearance, the first visit of the sun to the horizon wherein we are, transform a region of darkness into pleasant light! Look upon that wretched state of things wherein the Christian church is, and wherein we may well expect it farther to be, and in a deeper degree: if we think, that however when the Spirit is poured out, all is well, how adorable ought that Spirit to be to us! that mighty Spirit, that can even of a sudden new create the world, make new heavens and new earth, diffuse its light and influence every where, clothe all with lustre and glory! And truly I believe we must be brought to have higher thoughts of the Spirit than we have, before we see so good days as we would wish we might. Alas! how diminishingly is it conceived and spoken of amongst us! We have the name of the Spirit or of the Holy Ghost many times in our mouths, when our hearts ascribe not honour to him: we glorify him not as God in our conceptions: no, the notions of our minds and dispositions of our hearts are with too many, as if we had not "heard whether there be any Holy Ghost;" or as if it signified a mere nothing with us. But it concerns us to greaten our thoughts concerning the Spirit of the living God. When it works as the Spirit of nature, it renews the face of the earth, replenishes all the region with life. What would this creation be, if all divine influence were retracted and withheld, by which every thing lives, and which is attributed to the Spirit of God, as the active principle that works every where in the creation of the world, moving upon the abyss in the renewing of it from time to time? By him and from him there is such a thing as life in all the creation; he works all in all. But consider it also as a Spirit of holiness, of divine life and power in the spirits of men; what a mighty Agent is that, that can spread such an influence every where, unto the remotest corners of this world! and

can reach every heart of those that belong to God, and all at once; and pierce into them with so mighty power, that though all the art in the world cannot persuade and change the mind of a man, even in a matter of common concernment, if he be resolved, yet this Spirit can transform where it touches, and overcome, if it will, even in the first attempt! Oh! What homage should our souls within us pay to this Almighty Spirit! In how prostrate a posture should we be! How should we adore that Spirit, that can, when it will, fill all, every where with light and life!

5. We collect farther, that the grace of the Spirit is most admirably condescending, that it will ever vouchsafe to come down into such a world as this is: that there should be a time, in which such a favour is designed, as this, "I will pour out my Spirit." Well may it be called the Spirit of grace, the Spirit of all goodness and benignity and sweetness, that it will ever vouchsafe to visit our world, a world so drenched in impurity, and so environed with malignant darkness. How well does the name agree, "The Spirit of grace!" So hellish is the malignity, that would despise such a Spirit: he is called so on purpose, we may suppose, by the author to the Hebrews, to aggravate that malignity; and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace, Heb. 10. 29. But how magnificently glorious is that grace, that will finally overcome this malignity! That this Spirit will come down, and spread its light and influences through so much deformity and pollution and darkness, as is every where in this world; that it should become a soul unto such a world! What if an angel of God would humble himself to become a soul to a worm, to animate a worm? but a stranger humiliation far it is, that the Spirit of God should become as it were a soul to such a world as this. God says, "I have poured out my Spirit upon it, and now, will no more hide my face:" it should put our hearts into raptures. How should we fall down and adore the Spirit of life and grace! Wilt thou do this? wilt thou come down into such a world as this!

6. We may note farther, that the face of God shall never shine, but where he doth pour out his Spirit. His face will always remain hid towards the church, till the time comes that he pours out his Spirit. It will be of good service to consider this. Many vainly promise themselves halcyon days without the consideration of any influence of the Spirit connected with it; as if the aspects of providence could be favourable to them, and they could do well enough without the Spirit: if we can but enjoy peace and tranquillity, free trade and liberty to walk without check or control in the ways that we like best, though without the other; yet we are apt to think, that our

happiness would be sufficiently provided for. But we are not to expect, that the aspects of providence will be favourable, without a concurring effusion of the divine Spirit: it is neither like to be; nor would be to any good purpose, if it should.

It is not like to be; for why should we suppose it should? what is the church of God, when the Spirit is withdrawn and gone? what are they that call themselves of it, more than other men? If the Spirit be gone, what is it but an Aceldama? a Golgotha! a place of skulls, a place of carcasses! Do we think, that the divine glory shall only serve to adorn sepulchres? that the more glorious and pleasing aspects of providence shall only serve for that? You cannot long sever and keep off from death internal rottenness and corruption: and surely it is very unlikely, that God should take pleasure to discover himself and to display his glory among such, in the more remarkable works of his favourable providence.

And to what purpose would it be, if he should? What should we be the better for a state of external tranquillity and peace, if the Spirit be withheld? Sure you will think religion to be necessary at least to the church; otherwise what distinguishes that from another community of men? But what a sad frame of religion must there be, if the Spirit of God be not in it? we cannot call that state prosperous to the church wherein the spirit breathes not, unless sensuality will be the felicity of the church; unless we think ourselves warranted to abandon all care of the soul, and the belief of immortality and of a world to come, as if these were only mistakes and delusions: for great external prosperity to the church without the Spirit accompanying it, commonly issues in irreligion. That alone deserves to be esteemed a good state of things for the church of God, wherein the people of God every where are working and framing for a blessed eternity: and that they will never be without much of the divine Spirit.

THE

Obligations

FROM NATURE AND REVELATION

TO

FAMILY RELIGION AND WORSHIP,

REPRESENTED AND PRESSED

IN

SIX SERMONS.

TO THE READER.

THE favourable acceptance, which the generality of serious christians have given to Mr. Howe's late posthumous treatise concerning the prosperous state of the Christian Interest before the end of time, hath encouraged me to take the same pains in fitting for the press the following sermons of the same excellent author concerning family-religion. The copy, transcribed by some unknown, but skilful hand, different from that by which the sermons already published were preserved, was communicated to me by my worthy friend Mr. Herman Hood.

In the treatise just mentioned, Mr. Howe speaks of this as one of the ways, by which we may hope that the Spirit poured out will produce the better state of religion which we are expecting, namely, by means of family order * more generally and vigorously set on foot among the professors of Christianity. And certainly we cannot reasonably entertain strong hopes of the revival of the power of godliness either in our own age or the succeeding, till this necessary part of the form of it becomes general among christians. As long as a customary neglect prevails in seasoning the rising age with proper instructions in the families to which they belong; while our youth, that spring from parents or are intrusted with masters who bear a Christian name, grow up altogether disused from the daily exercises of social piety; the seed of the church will soon be lost among the men of the world, and religion must die away without some very supernatural reviving.

* Page 260.

This just apprehension occasioned that agreement among the protestant dissenting ministers of this city, of which mention is made at the beginning of these discourses, that were preached in pursuance of it in the year 1693, to engage the attention of their several congregations at one and the same time to this very great and important duty. Mr. George Hammond at that time published a discourse upon the subject, at the desire of the united ministers; to which Mr. Matthew Barker annexed an appendix: and Mr. Samuel Slater printed a course of sermons upon the head. I have been informed that, that general endeavour had the good effect by God's blessing to dispose several heads of families to set up religious exercises in them.

Another effort was made lately with as general concurrence by our ministers in the city, on November. 20. 1720, to enforce the same needful practice; I hope not altogether without success.

But still is there not too visible reason to fear, that the neglect of family-religion is a growing evil among us? Without prying unnecessarily into the affairs of families, it is unavoidable to those who have any conversation in the world, to hear from such as have been servants or residents in the houses of many who make great pretensions to religion without doors, that there is no more acknowledgment of God among them in daily family-devotion, than if they believed no such being.

I thought therefore, that it might be serviceable to publish this short set of discourses upon the argument; which appear to me to have placed the duty upon the most clear and indisputable foot, so as to be fit to reach all that are open to conviction; with a plainness for the greatest part suitable to the meanest capacity, and yet with a strength not to be evaded by the most judicious, and at the same time with a life and spirituality fit to impress every serious mind.

It is no wonder to find people, who evidently discover a disaffection to religion, hardly drawn to the stated practice of its exercises in their houses. Till their hearts are touched with a lively sense and relish of true piety, it cannot be expected that they should be forward this way, but rather keep themselves in countenance in their neglect by the number of like examples among such as have not cast off all pretence to religion. The wonder is, that any, who give reason from the rest of their conduct for apprehending them in the judgment of charity to have religion at heart, yet should omit so plain and profitable a duty.

The common reasons alleged by such are, either their inability to express themselves properly in family-devotion; or an insuperable modesty, which will not allow them to speak before others with any freedom of thought or tolerable possession of themselves.

And I freely allow, that the one or the other of these may be the case with persons sincerely religious, so far as to hinder them from the performance of family-worship to edification, at least at first, without the assistance of forms. But in God's name let none continue the omission of so plain a duty, out of a superstitious preju-

dice against precomposed prayers. Our forefathers the puritans were far from having an aversion to forms as such. Nor is our dissent founded upon a dislike of all use of them even in public; we only declare against the use of some passages which appear to us exceptionable, and against being so tied down to them, as to be obliged invariably to use them without alteration or addition. Most sober writers have concurred in advising to make use of them in the cases mentioned, till people can arrive at more improvement of judgment and a greater presence of mind. Many dissenters have published "forms for the assistance of those" to whom they were needful: as in Mr. Baxter's family-book; Mr. Murray's closet-devotions, recommended by Mr. Henry: Mr. Henry hath published some himself, at the end of his method of prayer. And as Mr. Howe in one of the following discourses declares his judgment for the use of them, rather than the duty should be omitted; so his practice was agreeable. There is a small book in octavo, entitled "prayers for families," printed by Mr. Thomas Parkhurst without any author's name, about the year 1795; of which the late reverend Mr. Jeremiah Smith gave me this account many years ago. Upon the marriage of a daughter of the right honourable Philip Lord Wharton, the lady being desirous to have the worship of God kept up in the family into which she was entering, requested Mr. Howe, Mr. William Taylor then his Lordship's chaplain, and Mr. Smith, to draw up some prayers for that purpose. Mr. Smith, according to his usual modesty, declined bearing a part in the service. But Mr. Howe and Mr. Taylor complied with the request; and their composures were privately printed, and made use of in that Lady's family.

I only mention these things, to prevent the misapprehension of any, as if in what I have said I had offered any thing singular. All who love religion in earnest, whether in or out of the public establishment, whether in their judgments they prefer praying by forms or otherwise, will I doubt not agree in this; that it is better that God should be worshipped either the one way or the other, both in secret, and in families, and in public assemblies, than that men should live in any of these respects, as "without God in the world".

For my own part, I should be glad that every head of a family were fully capable from time to time to represent the case of that under his charge with propriety and life, in supplication and praise and confession, according to all varying circumstances. But where that cannot be, yet I rejoice to know or to hear of a family, that seriously and solemnly calls upon the Lord in any way. Those who begin with a form, may find themselves gradually emboldened to go farther; and either totally in time lay that way aside; or sometimes pray the one way and sometimes the other, as they find the temper of their spirits to be; or, if they cannot get over the difficulties, which first made it necessary for them to use the assistance of other's composures, yet they may be able gradually to intersperse a sentence here and there suitable to special occurrences in their family, without any tremor.

And after all, whether our words flow from the abundance of the heart, or we endeavour to excite affections answerable to what the words before us suggest; if the God who knows the heart sees sincerity and true devotion in the worshipper; it will undoubtedly be accepted, according to that a man hath, and not according to that which he hath not.

I commend these discourses to the perusal of all serious christians, though of differing persuasions in lesser matters, earnestly begging, that by God's blessing they may reach the end of the author in preaching them, and of the transcriber in preparing them for public view; namely, the revival of religion in families, and by that means the diffusing of it far and wide in the present generation and in those which are to come.

I am

Your hearty well-wisher

for your best interests,

Prescott-street,
May 11. 1726.

JOHN EVANS.

SERMON I.*

Joshua xxiv. 15.

But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

THIS is the magnanimous resolution of that great and good man, Joshua, notwithstanding the supposed revolt of all the people of Israel from God, who had been bound to him by the most sacred and endearing ties. "Though you," says he, should all go off and apostatize from God, even to a man, after all the great and glorious things that he hath wrought among you and for you; that shall not alter me: through his grace, the course that I will take, and that mine shall take, whom I can have any influence upon or any power over, shall be the same it was. I and my house will serve the Lord notwithstanding. Though you should all turn pagans and idolaters to a man, that shall not overturn the religion of my family or of my closet, but there shall be serving of the Lord still."

It hath been an unanimous resolution among the ministers of indulged congregations in and about this city, to insist upon the subject of family-worship, even all at once, at least as many as to whom it was possible; and to begin upon it this very day, as I doubt not they generally do. And I should as little doubt the approbation and concurrence of divers other reverend persons in the ministry, who are not of that character, if there had been the same opportunity of consulting them and of knowing their sense; that is, of as many as do seriously desire and covet to see the prosperous and flourishing state of serious, vital and

* Preached December 25th, 1693

practical religion and godliness in our days. But they, who could confer and agree to concur in such an endeavour as this, have done it with all the cheerfulness and unanimity that could be thought. Indeed, since that resolution was taken, a providence hath occurred *among us*, which some might reckon would have diverted and altered it for the present: a farther breach, which God hath made upon our congregation, by the late decease of a considerable and very useful member of it, worthy Mr. Collet. Of whom divers might expect to hear a distinct account given them; apprehending, that it would not be so much an ornament to him or to his name when gone, as a means of instruction to them who are left behind.

But I am under restraint as to this; partly by my relation; but more principally by his own express prohibition, who declared his unwillingness to be made the subject of a funeral sermon. And that prohibition was equal (as any might understand,) to the most copious one that could have been made by way of commendation. For it more represented the temper of his spirit, than my words could have done; the meekness, the humility, the modesty of it; and was most agreeable to the habitual frame, from whence the way of his walking proceeded; steady, but still and without noise; and shewed how willing he was, that his exit out of this world might be with as much silence, as his course through it was.

Yet however, had I been to have preached a funeral sermon upon his account, I should never have laid aside for that the thoughts of this text. For I could not have found one in the whole Bible, from whence I might have more taken occasion to represent him, as to his person and as to his family, as an example of both personal and domestical religion, single and family godliness. And indeed were they who profess godliness generally in these respects like him, there would be much less need of preaching upon such a subject, or of taking up such a resolution as you have heard hath been general in reference thereunto.

But it hath been generally apprehended and feared, by them whom God hath set as watchmen amongst us, that the case is too much otherwise; and that the religion of families languisheth, or indeed hath no place at all in many families, where yet there is a profession of and a pretence unto godliness above the common rate. For my own part, I do not know that there is this sinful omission with any of you that have families; I do not know that there is: and therefore I cannot be understood, without great injury to me, to intend a reflection upon any particular person. But yet for all that, I cannot think a discourse upon this subject needless: for it is possible, many may be

guilty of this omission, though I know nothing of it; who do not covet to pry into families, beyond any particular occasion or call that I may have thereunto. And if it be so, it is not to be despaired of, but that through the blessing of God his word may be made use of to effect a conviction and a reformation of so great and so unsufferable an evil.

And it is possible too, that it may serve for the confirmation of such in that good course, as may be tempted to desist from it. For have none ever come within the compass of your knowledge, who have for some time continued to practise and keep on foot the worship of God in their families, but have at length abandoned it and given it over? That is a far fouler case. *Turpius ejicitur, quam non admittitur : it is a more ignominious thing to throw your religion and your God out of your families, than never to have admitted them.* I would labour to fortify all, as much as is possible, against that temptation.

And it is possible farther to be useful to divers, who yet have not families, but who may have; so as to be a guide and incentive to their purpose and practice for the future, when there shall be such occasions.

And even to us all, who are ever so resolute in the present use and for the continuance of this holy course, it may be useful for our quickening to manage this holy work with more seriousness, with more vigour, with more spirituality, and to better purpose, than we have been any of us to wont to do.

And as to the subject itself, you see the words of this text are very plain words. I and my house will serve the Lord. The word, house, indeed doth sometimes signify more largely; but it cannot be understood to signify any thing else here but an houshold: and so we are saved from any thing of a disputation about that matter. For Joshua speaks only of them, for whom he would answer, at least as to their visible practice, and whom he had a power over. "I and my house will serve the Lord." And he contradistinguisheth the case of his own family from the supposed different common case. For he supposeth all the rest to be gone off to paganism or the service of other gods; notwithstanding which the practice of his house and family should be the same that it was.

And for the term, serve, it is true the hebrew word here used is rendered promiscuously by the Septuagint in several places, so as sometimes to signify λατρεια, that is, that service which is peculiar and appropriate to God under the notion of worship to him; and sometimes to signify δουλεια, service in a much larger sense. Therefore I lay no stress upon the word, abstractly considered; but only considered according to the present circumstances. Abstractly considered, it is very true

it doth sometimes signify not only service to God, but to man. And again being referred to God, it sometimes signifies any other service or obedience or duty, besides worship; as we are to obey and comport with his pleasure in other things besides worshipping of him: and then this word serves to express that service. But in this place it can signify nothing but worship. That is most plain. It signifieth that sort of service, which must either be paid to the true God, or will be paid to false ones. "You may serve other gods; but I and my house will serve the Lord." So that it is worship or religion that is meant here, and nothing else. And therefore about that, there is no place or room left for disputation. And now so much being plain, you find a twofold resolution expressed in the text.

First. Concerning personal religion: the religion of a single person, solitary worship; that worship, that may be confined to a man's soul and to his closet. "I will serve the Lord: I will be a worshipper of him, as long as I live, let the rest of the world do what they will." And then here is a resolution expressed too,

Secondly. Concerning family-religion; and that as the care of the family-master, the governor of the family. He did not think he should answer the obligation that lay upon him as such, or do the part incumbent on him as so related, if he should shut up himself and his religion in a closet. No, but "I and my house will serve the Lord;" implying his resolution, both to do what was incumbent upon himself in worshipping God even among them, and to use the power he had to oblige them to a compliance and concurrence therein. Otherwise he must be thought to have spoken absurdly, when he says, "As for my house, we will serve the Lord;" if he must not be understood to have the authority in his own family to oblige them to attend thereupon.

It is the latter of these, which it suits our purpose to speak unto; though we shall in the close, God willing, look back upon the other two, as there will be occasion. The text will give it, and the series of the discourse will lead to it. So that, that which is left as the designed subject of my present discourse, is family-religion; the religion that belongs to a family as such, and which it belongs to a family as such to set on foot and to keep on foot in the family.

And here I cannot but be apprehensive, that wherever there is among professed christians a disinclination and aversion from such a course and practice as this, there will be (that they may give themselves a relief, that they may have some pretence and shelter against the urgency of what may be said in such a case,) an aptness clamourously to insist and cry out;

"But where is your proof? what proof have you, that there ought to be such a thing as family-religion? where is it required, that we must so, and so often, or in such and such a continued course, attend upon God in the performance of family-duties, and the exercises of domestical religion?" I doubt not, but by the blessing of God you will find, that there is proof clear and strong enough; as it was to be expected there should be in so important a case, and upon which so much depends. But before I come to give you any, I shall lay down some few things by way of preparation and premise. As,

1. That whereas this is matter of doubt, and is to be matter of dispute; that which is doubted of, is to be generally supposed not the substance of the thing spoken of, but only this or that circumstance. I hope that generally the matter that any would have brought into dispute, or for which they would desire proof, is not, whether there should be any such thing as religion in the world, or no. That cannot be the question with any, that call themselves christians, with any reason or modesty, at least till they have renounced that name: nor can any make that a question, consistently with themselves and with the dictates of human nature, unless they will renounce the name of man too. But the question must be, whether there ought to be religion in a family as such; and to be performed so, and so often, or in so orderly, continued and stated a course. Hereupon I would add,

2. That where the substance of any duty is agreed to be plainly required, it would be the most unreasonable thing in all the world to throw it off, upon a pretence, that such and such circumstances are not enjoined. Nothing can be more unreasonably absurd than that. For so you would come to throw out of the world the most undoubted parts of all religion whatsoever, the most essential, most noble, and substantial parts. There could be nothing of solitary and personal religion upon such terms. For instance; at this rate a man should be excused from ever remembering God as long as he lived, from ever having any thought of him, because Scripture doth not expressly tell us how often in a day we should think of him. And the same may be said of all other vital acts of religion. At this rate no body should be obliged to love God, because we are not told how often in a day we must put forth an act of love to him: and no body should be obliged to fear God, to exert any reverential acts towards him, because we are not told at what hour of the day it must be. And so for social worship, there could be no such thing upon these terms: if any man should say, I am not obliged to worship God in Christian societies any where, because he hath not expressly told us, you

shall come together at nine, or ten, or eleven o'clock for such purposes. And so under that pretence here would be an end of all religion, because every circumstance, and particularly this of time and frequency, is not stated expressly and determined in Scripture. I add,

3. That wheresoever the substance of any duty is expressly enjoined, and the circumstances are not determined; if it be plain and evident, that the thing is necessary, (and I will now suppose, that so family-religion is, as well as religion in general, as that which I hope you will see proved;) then it is left to us to choose the circumstances; but not to choose them arbitrarily, or unfitly, or inconsistently with the end and design of the duty. This is one of the good man's characters, that he orders his affairs with discretion, (psalm 112. 5.) with judgment, as the word admits to be read: he judiciously considers the several obligations that lie upon him, so as seasonably to answer them all. If the thing itself be manifestly enjoined, it is required of us, that we find out the way of circumstantiating it, so as may most comport with the mind and pleasure of the legislator in laying us under such an obligation: and at our peril be it, if we do not find the circumstances, when the thing is required to be done.

As for instance, to suit this with a parallel case; you know it is an obligation upon family-masters to take care as to externals for them that are of the household. He that doth not provide for them of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. 1 Tim. 5. 8. This charge lies upon him, that according to his ability he is to provide for his domestics: it is enforced upon him by a general law and precept: "Thou shalt do no murder." He would be a murderer before God, and before all rational and considering men, that should famish his family, when he could provide for them, and when his pretence is nothing else but this, "God hath not told me in his word how many meals they shall have in a day, or at what hour of the day I am to dine or sup them; he hath not said, it shall be at eleven or twelve or one a clock, or at seven or eight, that I shall so and so provide for them." This man will be nothing less than a murderer, than if the particular hour were told him in the Bible, when he must take care that they shall have that which is convenient and competent for their meat and drink. And I hope, in process of time we shall come to evince, that they are not less liable to be found guilty as murderers before God, that do famish the souls of them that are committed to their charge; but that that guilt is unspeakably more foul and horrid and hateful. And therefore I observe,

4. That when any thing by general rules is enjoined in Scripture, then we are to use our understandings in deducing and bringing down that general rule to particular cases. For the Scriptures were written not for brutes, but for men; for an intelligent sort of creatures, that have understandings about them, and are capable of using them, so as to deduce and collect particulars out of generals, and so as to infer from such and such plain grounds suitable conclusions and inferences: and what is by manifest and just deductions to be drawn from a Scripture-ground, will equally oblige, as if it were *certis verbis*, expressed in the Scripture itself. God doth speak to us as men, and it doth not beseem the majesty of God to trifle with his creatures. Indeed it would be thought unfit for the majesty of a prince, a secular prince, to descend to every little punctilio, when his mind in his public edicts is plainly enough expressed. It may better be expected, that there should be a grandeur observed by the supreme and universal Lord of all; and we should not expect him to descend to every minute thing, to gratify the litigious cavilling humour of every one that hath a mind to find all the flaws he can in God's commands, rather than obey them; even all the flaws and defects that he can any way suppose.

The great cry in this case is, "Is not the Scripture a perfect rule both of faith and manners? And therefore what is not to be found there, as to faith, we are not bound to believe; as to manners or practice, we are not bound to do." This is the allegation, when any have a mind rather to throw off such a piece of duty towards him that gave them breath, than to comport with his mind and pleasure in it. I therefore add,

5. That divers things, not so expressly contained in Scripture, will be found equally to oblige, if they be matters of practice. They will equally oblige to such practice, though not in so many words expressed in Scripture, if by any other light, than what is contained in Scripture as such, it shall be made to appear, that they are just and necessary.

You will say, What other light? I say, the light and law of nature. For we are to know, that the Scriptures were not written to repeal the law of nature. That is an unrepealable law, never possibly to be repealed, while God is God, and man is man. For therefore is it called the law of nature, because it results from the correspondency between the nature of man and the nature of God; and so is as impossible to be repealed, as it is impossible at once, that God should be ungodded, and that you should be nullified and reduced to nothing. It is true indeed, if the former were, the latter would be. But the former being altogether impossible, as long as a rea-

sonable creature continueth such, the obligation of the law of nature will unalterably lie upon it.

You are therefore to consider; Was there no sin or duty in the world, before the Scriptures were written, for two thousand years together? when we are told, that before the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed, when there is no law. Rom. 5. 13. And therefore there was this law of nature, in respect whereof men are a law unto themselves. Rom. 2. 14. That is, if they will look impartially and faithfully into their own souls, and not wilfully overlook their natural dictates and sentiments; if they will commune with themselves. And the very writing of the Scriptures doth suppose this, and all preaching according to the Scriptures supposeth it. Otherwise what means the apostle's saying in that text, 2 Cor. 4. 2. Recommending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God? That, which upon an impartial appeal to the conscience of a man in the sight of God he shall be obliged to judge is just and equal, binds his practice, and hath its ground in Scripture too, though every circumstance relating hereunto be not found there.

Scriptural revelation doth graft upon nature, that is, it supposeth us men. Otherwise to what purpose were it to put such a book into our hands; if we were not with dependance, with subordination, to apply our own understandings to consider what is contained there; still expecting and looking up to the Father of lights, from whom this collection of truths doth come to us, that he would irradiate or direct our minds, and enable us to discern his mind, as it is signified to us the one or the other way? All appeals unto the judgments and consciences of men were in vain and to no purpose, if what I now say were not to be admitted. I speak to wise men; says the apostle, judge ye what I say, 1 Cor. 10. 15. God's own expostulations with men suppose it. "Are not my ways equal? are not your ways unequal?" Ezek. 18. 29. All this doth suppose, that there is an understanding and a conscience, that is capable of judging. And whatsoever shall appear just and requisite and necessary unto that principle, must be understood to oblige by the authority of the Supreme Legislator, whose law this is. For he, that has made us and made our natures, has made this law that is written there.

Therefore this law is an inviolable law, and most deeply fundamental to all that we have contained in the Bible; which is but a superadded light. Inasmuch as it is most true, that this law of nature doth not declare, what is to be done by apostate and lost creatures in order to their recovery; therefore a supervening light is needful. The law of nature was impressed

upon the mind of innocent man, and respected his innocent state. But then, those that were obligations of duty laid upon him in that state, are incessant obligations. What! will God say, "Because my creature has made a defection from me, shall he by his own fault excuse himself from duty, and nullify the obligation of my law?" If that did oblige men to worship God, and oblige societies to worship him, lesser societies, supposing there had been such, while the state of innocency lasted; do we think, that that obligation is taken off by sin, by men's having offended and made a defection from God? As if men could nullify God's laws by disobeying them. And therefore, I say, what doth by the law of nature appear to be necessary, will equally oblige our practice, as if it were in so many express words in Scripture. And in the last place, I propose this to be considered too,

6. That it is a master-piece of the devil's artifice, to oppose the means of our direction in matters of practice to one another, and to their common end. And they are most stupid creatures, who will suffer themselves to be befooled by him in this matter. A great artifice of the devil! first to go about to oppose the light of nature, that is simply and truly such, (and there are characters, by which that may be discerned, though that is not the business of this hour,) unto Scripture-light; and then to oppose one piece of Scripture to another; and then to make it be thought, that all together is insufficient to the true end: or else to set the means against the end. This is a great design that he hath been driving, ever since there was a church in the world; and to engage men in broils and disputes upon such seeming oppositions; but all to divert the practice of what was really most necessary unto men's serving of God in this world, and their being happy with him in the other: and then to represent the means as insufficient to the end, and by consequence as opposite; as if all together would not serve, because one alone will not. As indeed this is plain, that the light of nature alone will not serve to enable a man to glorify God as God, and to conduct a man to a final felicity in him. Therefore, says the devil, "It is of no use at all;" and so men are to be given up to enthusiasm. Thus he imposeth upon one sort of men. Again, if such and such things be found not to be contained expressly in the Scripture-revelation, then Scripture-revelation alone is represented as insufficient; and thereupon there must be I know not how many traditions and inventions of men pitched upon, to supply or make up the defects of Scripture; or otherwise, upon pretence of this insufficiency, the end, that should be served by it, is represented as impossible to be served; and the Scripture shall be pretended to

throw religion out of the world, because it is no sufficient means to serve it: and at last men shall be left to live irreligiously, according to the disinclination and bent of a disaffected heart.

God hath not left us altogether "ignorant of Satan's devices;" and "in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." When he would so grossly impose upon us in so plain cases, we are very foolish creatures, sillier than the silliest bird, if we will suffer ourselves to be beguiled and imposed upon; especially as to such parts and pieces of our religion, as upon which all our present comfort and welfare, and our future and eternal hopes do so immediately depend. It would be great folly in so plain a case.

Do but consider a little, wherein this doth appear most plain, so that every one may understand it if he will. Take the most unquestionable and indisputable things, that lie within the compass of natural revelation, and that cannot be understood to serve any ill purpose, or to gratify any corrupt inclination in the heart of a man, but directly the contrary; take these natural sentiments, and take the whole compass of Scripture together with them; and here is that, which in point of rule both for faith and practice is every way sufficient to serve its end. When we say, the Scripture is a complete rule, we do not mean as severed and cut off from the law of nature, or in opposition to that, or as excluding that; but as including it; and as excluding only the unnecessary and arbitrary inventions of men, and the additions that they think fit to subnect to it. Take the Scripture, in conjunction with the frame of most unquestionably natural dictates and sentiments; and here we have an entire discovery of all that is requisite to our acceptable walking with God. And indeed all those more essential necessary dictates of the law of nature are contained in the Scripture. But there are many things, that are still to be borrowed from thence, which may respect the matter of undetermined circumstances; and circumstances of that kind, that they are necessary to actions to be done. Not merely unnecessary circumstances. For if any would take their advantage and occasion from thence, to devise what circumstances they please; that is a groundless and injurious pretence. There can be no action done but with circumstances; and the determination of some circumstances is necessary: as, it is impossible for an assembly ever to meet together, if they do not agree upon a time: there can be no such thing as social worship, if the persons that are to associate do not agree. Such a circumstance as this is necessary, because there cannot be worship without it. But for unnecessary circumstances, which signify nothing

to the work, and without which it may be, and may be as well and perhaps better; these cannot be fetched from the law of nature. But from the law of nature I can fetch this circumstance; if I be obliged to worship God, then I must find some time for it. And if persons be obliged to worship God together, then they must find some time to come together. And therefore all that is substantial in religion, though a great deal of it be in the law of nature, you have it over again in Scripture. And for whatsoever of circumstance is necessary unto such exercises of religion, if you have not all those circumstances in the Scripture, yet the law of nature compared with Scripture will oblige you to find out fit circumstances; such as by which it shall be possible for the enjoined duty to be done, and such as without which it cannot be done.

And so in this sense the Scripture is a perfect rule, in opposition to unnecessary inventions; but not in opposition to the necessary parts of the law of nature, or whatsoever that is necessarily to be directive to us in. As, if Scripture say, "Worship God;" the law of nature saith the same thing; but it over and above obligeth me to circumstance it duly, and so as that the thing designed may be possible to be done. And if both together do lay me under an obligation to this or that part or kind of religion and duty, my obligation will be indisputable and indispensible hereupon.

These preparations being laid, we shall (God willing,) go on hereafter to evince to you the obligation that is upon us to family-worship; on the governors of families to take care, that it be set up; and to oblige those under their charge to concur; and their obligation spontaneously and willingly to concur.

SERMON II*.

BECAUSE I lay a great stress in the argument before us upon the law of nature, as you may see by what hath been already offered; it may be requisite, before I proceed upon the forelaid grounds to the proofs, that I should obviate some things which may arise in the minds of some or other concerning this law.

Objection. It may be said; "To lay a weight in this matter upon the law of nature, is to lay it upon the most uncertain thing in all the world. Who can tell, what the law of nature is? How obscure and dark, how dubious and mutable a thing doth it seem to be; depending with one man upon this or that apprehension or fancy or inclination, and with others upon another?" To this I would say as follows,

1. The law of nature, as it lies in the minds of men, is a mightily shattered thing. But,

2. It is not equally obscure in all things.

3. In reference to what I design to appeal to it in, it is most clear and indisputable: and I shall lay a weight and stress upon it no where else, but where it is so.

4. As to what relates to this matter, religion and the wor-

* Preached December 17th, 1693.

ship of God in general, and which we shall afterwards have occasion to deduce and draw down to family-worship; it is so very plain, that is, the general is so plain, that I may be as sure what the law of nature is in the case, as I may be that contradictions cannot be true. For the worship of God or religion doth carry that in it, the assertion or affirmation whereof must as necessarily exclude the contrary, as one proposition must exclude another contradictory to it.

For instance. When I worship God, my worshipping of him doth imply these affirmations in it; that he is supreme, that he is the best of beings, that all things do depend upon him, that I have my own absolute dependance upon him, that in his favour stands my life, that his displeasure and anger towards me not reconciled must be a mortal and destructive thing to me. My declining or refusing to worship him implieth all the contrary negations. If the former affirmations be true; (and the conscience of every man may be applied unto, whether they be not true;) the contrary negations can no more be true, that is, the contradictory, than it is possible for the same thing to be true and false.

So little do we need to be at an uncertainty or in a suspense, what the law of nature, as we shall refer to it, is. It is nothing else, but that essential reference between God and his creatures, which, upon the supposed existence of both, is necessarily and unavoidably, whether I think of it, yea or no. It is not an uncertain or mutable thing; it doth not depend upon my thinking or not thinking of it. Whether I think or think not, whether I sleep or wake; if God is and I am, such obligations must lie upon me necessarily and unalterably in this state of the case. That is, there are these things to be considered in God; and such really is the state of things between him and me, that I cannot but be under such obligations. And therefore it is vain to suppose, that the law of nature in these respects is an arbitrary and changeable thing. It is no more changeable, than the essential references must be between God and me, while he exists, and I exist: so that I cannot make these obligations to be by my thinking of them, nor can I unthink them into nothing.

And when we therefore read of the law of nature as a law written in us, as the apostle's expression is; that must suppose it to have been, before it is written, that is, in order of nature before. For what is it that is written? Something that was before, at least in the order of nature. Those mutual references must be between God and us, which are only founded upon our own natures. They had a pre-existence; that is, whether there be any such impression upon me or no; if it remain, or

if it be blotted out, that doth not nullify the obligations between me and my Maker. And if those obligations do unalterably and indispensibly lie upon me in reference to myself, it will be a very easy deduction, when we come to that, to shew that they must lie upon me also, in reference to those that I am concerned for. And hereupon, though after the apostle we call this a "law written in our hearts," we must consider it as antecedent to that impression. Cicero, a heathen, calls it *non scripta sed nata lex, a law born with us;* which results from the very existence of such a creature, of such a nature, related to the Supreme Being as his offspring, or one that hath immediately been raised up out of nothing by him.

But now upon all this, such preparatories being forelaid, we shall proceed to the proof of what hath been asserted; that is,——That it is incumbent upon the governors of families to take care that there be such a thing as family-religion preserved and kept up in their families as such.——We must here note to you, that by the exercises of religion in families, we do not mean, that all the exercises of religion must be there; that every instituted Christian ordinance can have place in a family. We do not intend that, unless in such families as may be also churches; as we read of some such in Scripture. But we mean such exercises of religion, as a family is the capable seat and subject of; as it is of those parts of merely natural worship, which are wont to be referred to that head: as prayer, comprehending confession of sin, and thanksgiving for mercies; and instruction, the endeavour of knowing and of being acquainted with the mind and will of God, touching what we are to believe concerning him, and touching what we are to do in a way of duty towards him. These are things, which lie within the compass of natural worship.

It is true, that there are instituted ordinances of worship besides, (as even these mentioned are instituted, as well as natural,) that do belong to a certain specified seat and subject; to wit, such and such societies, which the very institution itself doth characterize and notify as the apt and convenient seat and subject of such worship. Those I do not speak of. But that such parts of worship, that have been spoken of, which are natural as well as instituted, namely, praying to God, and instruction in the matters that concern us towards him, do belong to families as such, I shall labour to evince and make out to you. And I shall endeavour to do this, partly upon *rational*, and partly upon *scriptural* grounds. And I shall do it in reference to these two things;

I. To the substance of family-religion; that there ought to be such a thing as family-religion, containing those two substantial parts that I have mentioned. And,

II. To the frequency thereof; when and how often such and such acts and exercises of religion ought to be performed.

I. That there ought to be such a thing as family-religion, made up of the mentioned parts, *family-prayer*, and *family-instruction*.

1. I shall labour to make out this to you upon *rational* grounds. And to that purpose I shall give you one general argument,—from the notion of religion generally considered—which, as such, must be understood to carry with it a double respect, namely,—to its *object*—the great God: and—to its *subject*—a reasonable or intelligent creature, or a collection of such, by whom it is to be performed. Under the former notion, or in the former reference, it is to be looked upon as a duty to him, to whom I perform it, or such and such exercises of it. Under the latter notion, it is to be looked upon as a thing necessary for ourselves, for our own welfare and advantage, present and eternal.

The former notion doth not extinguish or exclude the other. But it sheweth, how admirably God hath connected things, even in their natures; and with how tender regard to his creatures, that shall continue in, or that shall be reduced to an obediential or governable state and posture towards him: that they cannot do what is for his honour and glory, but they must be promoting their own true interest at the same time and by the same thing; that as religion is a homage to the eternal Being, a debt that the reasonable nature ought to pay him; so it is as to ourselves a means to refine our spirits, to purge them from terrene dross; in the acts and exercises of which, we converse with the best of beings, the most pure, the most glorious, the most vital; and so derive an enlivening and purifying influence into our own souls. These notions are not inconsistent, or exclusive of one another. But the Author of our being hath so kindly ordered the state of things between himself and us, that that which sums up all our duty, sums up all our felicity too, Love to God: this sums up all that we are to do, and all that we are to enjoy. By one and the same love, we vitally do all that can be done by us in point of duty, and vitally enjoy all that can be enjoyed by us in point of felicity. Therefore wonder not, that there should be these two references of religion, that belong to it in itself most abstractly considered, so that we cannot consider or form a notion of it, but

we must involve both of these: for it must be performed to some one, and by some one. There can be no such thing as vital religion, but it must be terminated upon God, and subjected in ourselves and so cannot but have these distinct references with it. Hereupon then,

(1.) Consider religion according to the former reference, as a homage to God; and if it be found equally to be a homage to him from a family, as it is from a single person, then the obligation to family-religion will be indispensible and indisputable upon this ground. We shall consider, how this obligation as to persons doth arise, that is, to pay such a continual homage to God as religion includes and involves in it.

[1.] As he is the *most excellent* of all beings, so there is an obligation to worship him, or to bear a religious disposition and affection of soul towards him. That name of God, which includes all divine excellencies and perfections in it, "is exalted above all blessing and praise." Neh. 9. 5. Hence it is consequent, that my capacity measures my obligation. And I pray consider that; and let your own thoughts, as you hear it, examine it. If the divine name, comprehensive of all excellencies, be exalted above all blessing and praise; then I can never go beyond what I owe in point of homage thereunto. And therefore it cannot be, but that capacity must measure obligation. If I am capable of doing so much in a way of homage to the supreme and most excellent Being, I am bound to come up to that. If I can do more, I must still do that more; and so on still; because this blessed name is exalted above all blessing and praise. If I have a capacity then in my own person to do any thing in a way of duty towards this most excellent Being, whereunto therefore I owe that duty; whatsoever that capacity of mine extends to, I am to serve and glorify him according to the utmost of it. And if I am to be considered, not only in my own single personal capacity, but as the head of a family also; then, if capacity do measure obligation, I am to do all that in me lies, that he may have as much honour from my family, as he is to have from me; because it is as much owing, and I can never overdo in point of duty towards him, in whatever capacity I stand.

Suppose then my single capacity to be indeed improved to serve and glorify him, but that I neglect the other; may not he come and say, "There is another capacity in which you stand, pray what do you for me in that? Do you owe me no duty, as you are the master of a family, and have the care of others upon you? Both you and those for whom you are concerned owe me duty in that capacity; and you are concerned to see that that duty be done, by reason of the authority that you

have over them, and the obligation that you can subordinately lay upon them." This is implied in the text; "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." He supposeth that capacity inherent in him, that he could not only do such duty or service himself, but that he could oblige those that were under his care.

Now where is that man, that dare stand forth and say, "It is true I owe all the homage I am capable of performing, for my own person, to that most excellent of all beings, because he is most excellent, and because his name is far exalted above all blessing and praise; but my family owes him nothing, or I owe him nothing for my family?" Whereas you are in the capacity of a governor of a family, as well as in a single capacity; and may do still more to glorify that name in your family-capacity, than you could do in the other alone: but while there is a capacity unanswered of glorifying the most excellent Being, an obligation must remain upon me to answer it, since I can never here exceed or even come up to what he deserves.

[2.] The obligation to religion ariseth also from our dependance upon the Divine Being for our first and for our continued being, as he is our Creator, and our continual Preserver, and consequently our Owner. And can any man say, "God hath created me, but he hath not created mine! He continually preserves and sustains me, but he doth not preserve and sustain mine!" But if I owe him my all, upon account of my own dependance on him, for my being, and for my hoped and expected well-being, present and eternal; is not the case so with my family also? Is he not the Proprietor and Owner of that, as well as of myself? Who would not tremble to say, "God hath no interest in my family, no right there?" And if he hath an interest and propriety there, shall he not be owned and have a homage paid him by my family as such? And I being a certain sponsor for them, and set over them, am bound to do all that in me is, that the obligation upon them be answered, as well as that personally upon myself.

[3.] The dueness of religion as a homage to God, may be farther argued from the very nature of man: not only with reference to personal, but to domestical religion, as he is naturally not only a reasonable, but a sociable creature. As he is a reasonable creature, so he owes religion as a homage to him, who has been the Author of this rational, intelligent nature to him. As he is a sociable creature, so he owes social religion, or worship in society: and in that society first, wherein he is first capable of rendering it, that is, in his family. This obligation lies upon him, and is always first to be answered. There was social worship in families, before there could be

other social worship. And that obligation, if it lay once, lieth always upon the same sort of persons. As God hath made me a creature apt for society, and hath cast me into such societies, I am obliged to worship him in them, by the very law of my own nature.

[4.] This debt of religion to God, even as from a family, is to be argued from the very constitution of families. They are divine plantations settled by God himself, for this very end and purpose, to be nurseries of religion and godliness. If God be the Author of such a constitution, and if religion be the end for which he hath purposely constituted them, then certainly there ought to be family-religion and godliness. For the former, nothing is plainer. "God setteth the solitary in families." Psalm 68. 6. God hath so provided, that men should not live single and apart in this world in an ordinary course; but he hath so stated things, that they must be united and meet together first in families. And he in his providence makes so many single persons to be so and so related, as to constitute a family. And what will he have these families for? Plainly to be seminaries of religion. And see, how his design for that purpose may be evinced. If the most fundamental relation in a family, the conjugal relation, be for that end, and was appointed by God for that end, then certainly the family must be in the design of its constitution set up for that end: but the former is plain. The fundamental relation in the family was, that God might have out of it a godly seed; as the original constitution of families is referred to in Mal. 2. 15. "Did not he make one" for one at first? "And wherefore one? That he might seek a godly seed." He did not design the original constitution of that fundamental relation, by which mankind was to be continued and propagated in this world, only that there might be a continual descent of human nature; but that religion might still be transmitted from age to age. And this design of his he never quits. For is it a supposable thing, that his creature, by revolting from him, and sinning against the obligation of that law, which was naturally and primarily laid upon him as he was such a creature, should be capable thereby of nullifying God's constitution, or making such obligation to cease?

Nothing then can be plainer, than that, if God have appointed families to be nurseries of religion from age to age in this world, there must then be such a thing as family-religion. Otherwise why should he seek such a godly seed out of human families, more than out of the cells of wild beasts, if there were no such thing as religion and godliness designed by him to be kept up in families? How shall godliness spring up

with human nature in families, if there be no such thing as family-godliness carefully maintained and kept up in the several exercises of it there?

Thus far the obligation unto religion, as it is a debt to God, and equally concerning families as persons, may be plainly inferred from *rational* grounds: and that these things were not unapprehensible to men, even by natural light; though they depend not thereupon; for whether we understand this or understand it not, this truly is the state of the case. But that the thing hath such a foundation in nature, may be collected hence, that they who have had no other light than merely natural, have apprehended an obligation upon them to family-religion. For otherwise how came it to pass, that besides their temple-worship, among the pagans they had their *lares*, their *penates* to worship in their families, their family and domestical gods, as they called them? Whence came it to pass, that Laban had his gods in his house, which were carried away from him by Rachel? Whence was it, that Micah had his idol in his house, and his domestical priest to manage religion in his family? As in Judg. 18. you have the story at large, from ver. 14. But you may say, "All this was but idolatry."

But then I would appeal to your reason or any man's else; In the room and stead of what stood that idolatry? Was it to be supposed, that it must stand in the room of irreligion, or in the room of no religion? Or did it only stand in the stead of true religion? Let any man answer by the rules of reason and conscience, when he considers this case. Here was idolatrous worship in families among wilder pagans; they had their *lares*, their *penates*. What was to be in the room of this? Or what was this to be in the room of? Was it to be in the room of no religion, or of true religion? Sure it must be in the room of true religion; and that it had supplanted. It did not stand in the room of no religion, or no religion was not to be the thing which should succeed it, if this idolatrous worship were to be removed out of such families.

So may this matter be argued concerning family-religion and the dueness of it; if you consider religion in general as a homage owing to God, and equally owing to him from a family as from single persons; and to which a single person, if he be also a master of a family, is equally obliged for them as for himself to do the utmost that he can, that it should be rendered to God as a debt to the divine Majesty.

SERMON III.*

TO prove that there ought to be such a thing as family-religion, it hath been proposed to consider both the *rational* and the *scriptural* grounds, upon which it stands.

For the former, the *rational* grounds of it, we have chosen to insist upon one general argument from the nature of religion; which, as hath been observed, is to be considered under a twofold notion, both of which it naturally involves;—as a homage to God, and—as an advantage to men.—If it be found in this double reference to concern men in families as such, then it ought upon both accounts to have place there.

We have already considered it for this purpose in the former reference, as a homage to God. Proceed we now to the other branch.

(2.) Consider religion as an advantage to men. And if upon that account too, the reason of the thing doth as much reach my family, as it doth myself; then family-religion ought to be inferred upon me as a charge, as an obligation necessarily incumbent, as well as personal religion. Plain it is, that religion is the greatest advantage to a man that he is any way capable of. Do not we know, that he is an undone, lost creature,

* Preached December 24, 1693.

separate from God, having nothing to do with God? It is by religion, that he comes to have to do with God. He neither trusts him nor loves him nor feareth him nor delighteth in him, if there be no religion; for these are all the essential, vital parts of it. And therefore religion, as it is that by which I have to do with God, is necessary for me. And it is necessary for mine, as much as for me.

And a twofold consideration will evince to us the obligation, that must lie upon family-governors to introduce and to keep up religion in their families, upon this account, as a necessary advantage to them; namely, *paternal love*, and *paternal fidelity*. When I say, *paternal*, it is not as if I would confine the duty as owing from a parent to a child only. For the notion of paternal goeth farther. Every family-governor is a *paterfumilias*, in a sort, a father unto the whole family; as a prince is a father to the whole community which he governs. And so it is a sort of paternal love and paternal fidelity, that he oweth and is chargeable with in reference to the whole family, who is the head and governor of it. Whereupon it is, that duty among all relatives is summed up in the fifth commandment, "Honour thy father and thy mother." We must thereupon understand it to be implied, that all superiors are signified by father and mother, and all inferiors by children, the implied opposite term. Hereupon then I say, that

[1.] Paternal *love* doth oblige the governor of a family, the *paterfamilias*, to take care, that family-religion do obtain in his family, as it is a necessary advantage to them. The thing speaks itself so plainly, that I need not insist upon it; but only direct your thoughts thereupon to the contrary, that you may see, with how odious and frightful a visage that will look. If paternal love do oblige and would prompt to such a care of a family, as that religion may obtain and take place among them, as a necessary advantage which they cannot want; then the contrary unto this, must speak in the root the contrary unto love: and that contrary must be the most horrid thing in this case that can be thought, that is, cruelty unto the very height. For, as this love speaks tenderness, mercifulness, compassion to the souls of men, that I cannot endure to see them perish in ignorance of God and estrangement from him and neglect of him; the contrary must needs speak the most horrid and the most barbarous cruelty; as if a man should say, and not care if it was written in his forehead, "I mind not what becomes of the souls of men that are committed to my charge, I care not whether they be saved or perish, whether they be happy or miserable to all eternity." With how horrid and frightful a visage doth this

look, only to represent and state the matter just as it is! And

[2.] Paternal *fidelity* doth oblige to it also. For there is a trust committed by the great and universal Lord of all to every master of a family, over them that are under his charge; and in reference to them he is a trustee. It is virtually said to every one, by the divine law and providence compared and put together; "I constitute thee my trustee in reference to this part of mankind, as many as are collected and gathered into thy family, and belong to it, whether naturally or by accession; they are thy charge, I intrust them to thee." Thereupon, as hath been noted to you formerly, from 1 Tim. 5. 8. He that doth not provide for his own, and especially for those of his own house, hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. The word is very emphatical, προνοεῖ; he that doth not use his mind and forethought about the affairs and concerns of his family. Let it be but according to common reason considered, how far that providing for one's own must extend. And to say, that one that doth it not is worse than an infidel, is to say, that infidels even by the light and law of nature may be directed to do much, in reference to the care of their families in matters of religion. As is intimated by what was noted to you the last time about their *lares* and their *penates*, their household gods to worship in families, besides the worship which they used to pay in the temples; and whereof you have instances in Laban's and in Micah's families. And whereas it may be obvious to say, "But all this was but idolatry:" this must indeed be confessed to be true. But what was to be in the room of that idolatry? Sure true religion, and not irreligion! So that room should have been filled up. And no man, that doth but commune with himself and consult his own understanding, can allow himself upon serious thoughts to think, "I do owe, even upon account of a trust reposed in me, a care and concern about the outward man of the several individual persons of my family, but none at all about their souls; I am to take care, that they have meat and drink and all necessaries for their bodies, but about their souls I am to take no care." Men will know one day, that they owe an account and a severe account too unto the Author of all nature, if they allow themselves to violate the law of nature; which is not an arbitrary thing, doth not depend upon the minds of men, or what they think or think not. But whether they think or not, the nature of things alters not; but God will be a God still, and a creature will be a creature still, and the respects the same between God and a creature. So that it is an idle mistake to think, that the law of nature is a mutable thing. Men do so impose upon themselves, merely upon this ground, that they

think there is no law of nature but what exists in men's minds; whereas it lies even in the nature of things, and their natural references to one another. It is to be considered in its objective state, before it be considered in its subjective. Those respects that result betwen one thing and another, and especially between Creator and creature, will be unalterably the same, whatsoever is, or is not in our minds.

And so whether you consider religion as a homage to God, or as an advantage to man, you see the obligation that will lie upon men either way unto family-religion. But then, according to the method proposed,

2. I come to evince to you the substance of the thing, that there ought to be family-religion, from *scripture-grounds*. And,

(1.) I shall labour to establish the *general foundation* upon such grounds; namely, that there is a charge lying upon the governors of families to take care, that there be such a thing as family-religion; that there may be no shifting here; but that they may know, where the obligation primarily lies, and where the fault lieth, if it be not answered: that it is incumbent upon heads of families, to settle and keep on foot religion in them.

[1.] If there be a power given them, there is a care lying upon them. These two will answer one another. But they have a power given them. The station of superiority, wherein God hath set them, speaks that. "Honour thy father and thy mother." In reference to the inferior relatives of the family they have a governing power: and if there is a duty to be paid them, then there is a power wherewith they are invested, that renders them the due objects thereof. Therefore the great God himself, speaking of himself as invested with such capacities, and personating the governor of a family, saith, (Malac. 1. 6.) "A son honoureth his father: I am a father, where is the honour due to me hereupon? A servant feareth or reverenceth his master; I am a master, where is my reverence?" Therefore there is an honour and reverence due to fathers and masters as such, and therefore a power conferred upon them; and with a power a care cannot but be incumbent.

[2.] How otherwise was it possible for Joshua, as here in the text, to undertake for his family as well as himself? to be a sponsor for them? "But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

[3.] How comes it to pass, that Abraham is so highly commended for this, and his example recommended, that he would command his household, that they should keep the way of the Lord! That he should use an authority, and lay an obligation

upon them to keep God's ways, that is, no doubt, to attend upon the exercises of religion?

[4.] If there were not such a charge and care lying upon a family-master, what meaning can we suppose the words of the fourth commandment should have! "Thou shalt remember to keep holy the Sabbath-day, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, and even the stranger," a lodger. Whence is this, that such a charge should be laid upon the *pater-familias?* though as is commonly and very aptly observed, it doth comprehend together the conjugal relatives, who are spoken to but as one person. These two are one; and then the other relatives in the family ensue, "thy son, thy daugher," &c. Yea and if there be a stranger, he is to partake, if in the provisions, in the religion of the family too. And I remember it to have been one of the meditations of Mr. Fuller in his miscellanies; that, having had a person of great quality one night lodged under his roof as a stranger, out of an excess of modesty he forbore the duties of his family that night: and he hath a penitential meditation hereupon, acknowledging his great fault, and making very solemn resolutions and vows never to be guilty of the like again; but if any one, though never so great, did partake in the provisions, he should partake in the religion of his family.

But that this charge should be laid upon the family-master, even about that piece of religion, the observation of the Lord's day; it bespeaks a charge from God incumbent upon the *pater-familias* in reference to the religion of the family.

And if any should yet pretend to have a doubt; I would have them to consider the matter with caution, whether there be any such charge lying upon them. Truly it concerns men, in point of prudence, to beware how they are shy of owning an authority in their families: for if you should pretend to doubt it, you would teach them it may be to doubt and to deny it too, and so make yourself to signify nothing in your family. But if that is but of small concernment to you; it is of the greatest concern imaginable, in reference to him whom you represent, and with whose authority you are invested. You have so much of the power of God lodged and seated in you; and it is treachery and falsehood to the great Lord and Ruler of the world, to let his authority, wherewith he hath invested you, be neglected and slighted and trampled upon, or not exerted and put forth to the uttermost for the ends for which he hath so seated it.

And if yet any should think, that such a charge is not sufficiently evinced to lie upon them; I would very fain know, in reference to what relative of the family you think it lieth not? For,

First. In reference to the conjugal relatives, they are joint partakers therein; and there is a duty incumbent upon both, even upon the inferior relative, especially in case of the other's absence or indisposition. But it lieth supremely upon him that is first in that relation, who is required to dwell with his wife, even as a man of knowledge, according to knowledge; (1 Pet. 3. 7.) implying therefore, that he hath a charge even in reference to her. And it is his great iniquity, if he do not labour to render himself capable to discharge it; to add to her treasury of knowledge of divine things, that concern her Godward. They are to be mutual helpers one to another, in reference to the concernments of their souls and a future state, and to the joint duty, which they owe to the Author of their being, as partakers together "of the grace of life." But the charge lieth chiefly here, (though it be mutual towards one another,) upon the superior relative; though each is also to endeavour to the uttermost the saving of the other's soul, "What knowest thou, O wife, whether thou shalt save thy husband? or how knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife?" (1 Cor. 7. 16.) Both are as it were to engage to their uttermost in an endeavour to save one another's souls.

Secondly. In reference to children, there can never be any doubt; who are sprung from you, in reference to the souls of whom you have a special charge lying upon you. It is true, you did not make their souls; there is another Father of their spirits. You are the fathers of their flesh, not of their spirits: as these two are contradistinguished in Heb. 12. 9. But you are the means of those souls coming into union with mortal flesh, and of bringing them into a world of snares and temptations dangerous to their souls. Can it then be, that you should be exempt from care and concern in reference to their souls?

Thirdly. As to servants, God hath charged them to obey you. He hath most expressly directed you to command them equally, as knowing yourselves to be under a command, that you have a Master in heaven, and are to command them for his ends and purposes. Nothing is plainer, if you look to Eph. 6. Col. 3. & 4. 1. Tim. 6. where these relative duties are spoken of. So that they come by contract, as your children do by nature, under your commanding and governing power and authority. And that power infers care, and principally about their souls. I could appeal to any master of servants in such a case. Do you expect, that your servants should serve you only with their hands? Do you not expect they should serve you with their minds and understandings, as well as their limbs? Sure then their inward man, their souls are to be cared for by you, as well as their outward man, their bodies. You would not

have them to do you only such service as you can receive from a beast; and therefore you are to take care of their spirits, as well as their brutal part.

So much I reckoned it was necessary to lay down here upon Scripture-grounds, to clear our foundation, that there is such a thing as a charge, a care lying upon governors of families over the families which God hath entrusted them with, to keep up religion there. Hereupon,

(2.) We shall proceed to give you proof upon *scripture-grounds*, that there ought to be in particular those two parts of family-religion maintained and kept up by them, upon whom this care and charge hath been evinced to lie; to wit, family-instruction, and family-prayer. And we shall endeavour to evince both.

[1.] From such scriptures, as either command the one or the other of these, in such terms as that it may be discernible that the obligation will reach to families; that is, to the family-governors in reference to the family: either express precepts; or virtual precepts, such passages as some way imply and infer precepts, and are so applicable, or from whence inferences may be collected and drawn. As,

First. For family-instruction. You have a most express command upon masters of families, that they shall teach the substance of religion to them who are under their care: nothing can be plainer than those words in Deut. 6. After this was given in charge in general, (which contains all religion in it,) ver. 5, 6. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might: and these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart." Then it follows, ver. 7. "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Observe what they were to teach them; the substance of religion, all comprehended in the love of God, which is the fulfilling of the law: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, &c. And these words," and all that may be referred thither, to that great and all-comprehending topic, "thou shalt teach and diligently teach thy children." Children means the family, as we noted to you before; an apt synecdochical expression, as *pater-familias* is the head of the whole family. "And thou shalt teach them, when thou sittest in thine house." It is true, there are other occasions to be taken: but this speaks a stated teaching, to have times on purpose to collect and gather the family, and to set one's self in the authority of a family-master, and there instruct and teach those under his care and charge, in the great substan-

tials of religion. You have the same thing inculcated in Deut. 11. 19.

And more general precepts of the same kind are applicable plainly enough unto this purpose. As, when we are required to "exhort one another," and to do it "daily, while it is called to-day, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." Heb. 3. 13. And to have the word of Christ dwelling richly in us, that we may teach and admonish one another. Col. 3. 16. How obvious is it to any one of common sense to infer, that if I owe this occasionally unto a fellow-christian, I owe it statedly to my own family? If there were no such express precept, and a man had this to allege in the judgment of the great day, Lord, thou gavest me no command; suppose there were no such positive commands, as those in Deuteronomy, and that in Proverbs for instructing and training up children in the way they should go: suppose such general precepts as those just mentioned were alleged to any man in the great day, "You knew well enough, that it was a duty lying upon you towards any fellow-christian, as there was occasion, to teach and exhort and instruct him; and he was under the same obligation towards you; had you not reason and understanding enough to make an inference, that if you owe so much to another occasionally, you must owe much more statedly to your own?" What could a man say, if this were urged upon him from the tribunal of the Supreme Judge?

Secondly. For family-prayer, such general precepts, as the Scripture is full of, are capable enough of application to this particular case. And we owe so much to God, yea to ourselves, to our own nature, as we are creatures endued with a reasonable nature, as to make the inference. That is, that when we are charged to pray with all prayer and with all supplication, we collect hence; sure it cannot be said, that family-prayer is no prayer.

And it is a very observable thing, though I have not found it observed, to this purpose; that in those several places of Scripture, where the duties of domestical relatives are largely spoken of, immediately thereupon there is a charge given about prayer, or some mention of prayer. Thus, after the apostle had directed in the 5th and 6th chapters to the Ephesians; Ye wives, carry it so and so to your husbands, and ye husbands to your wives; ye children to your parents, and parents to children; ye servants to masters, and masters to servants; and after some directions given to arm ourselves for spiritual conflicts; he immediately subjoins, (chap. 6. 18.) "Praying always with all prayer and supplication." So in Col. 4. 2. just after a summary of the several duties of family-relatives, follows

this exhortation; "Continue in prayer:" implying, that there must be a continued course of family-prayer between these several family-relations, or else all is in vain and to no purpose. And when the apostle Peter had given like directions, all is enforced upon this consideration, that "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers." 1 Pet. 3. 12. Be sure you do so and so, and let your consideration be orderly and regular, as ever you expect your prayers should be answered, that in your families shall from time to time be put up.

And if to pray, when there is occasion, with other christians be highly recommended by our Saviour himself, as more grateful, and likely to be more successful, when "two or three are met together;" if to do so with any two or three be so recommended, then most of all with those of our own family; because with them the occasions are more frequent, and may more easily be had, and the obligation is deeper and stronger; as any man, that considers what it is to have a family, and to have a charge lying upon him in reference thereto, cannot but apprehend.

But beside *direct* precepts; either referring to a family in particular; or enjoining both family-instruction and family-prayer to fellow-christians in general, which must be more obligatory in reference to those, with whom we have a particular concernment; besides these, I say, there are *virtual* precepts, or rules extendable unto this case, that may with great cogency and evidence of reason be applied to it; which suppose matter of precept in the case.

As, when the religion of families is spoken of as matter of divine acceptance: that implieth it to be agreeable to God's preceptive will, without which nothing could be acceptable. As when it is spoken by way of encomium, that "the voice of joy and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous;" (ps. 118. 15.) the solemnities of religion there are most manifestly intended. Go to the dwelling of a righteous man, and there you may hear the voice of rejoicing and praise: it belongs to a righteous man as such, therefore it cannot be the common, carnal rejoicing of the wicked that is there meant: but it must be a holy, religious thanksgiving and praising of God; which is but a synecdochical expression of all the other parts of his worship; as if he had said, "You may so distinguish the houses and tabernacles of the righteous and unrighteous. You may pass the unrighteous man's dwelling, and there you hear swearing and blaspheming of God, it may be higher jollity than in the other: but in the other you hear the voice of joy and salvation: God is owned and taken notice of:"

So again, when we are told, what complacency God doth differently take in the solemnities of his own worship, (psalm, 87. 2.) "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob." He is more honoured and glorified by the public solemnities of worship; and therefore doth take more complacency in them. Yet there is a complacency he also takes in the worship performed in the several habitations of his people. Why doth God love the gates of Zion, more than all the dwellings of Jacob, but only because there was the seat of more public, solemn religion? But when it is said, he loveth them more; it is intimated that he loveth the dwellings of Jacob too; and upon the same account, because every such dwelling was to be looked upon as a seat of religion. For Zion was loved and delighted in under no other notion, and the several dwellings of Jacob are delighted in under the same notion; though less, as they are less public and solemn.

And again, threatenings and menaces do imply precepts, for violations of which they are given out. As that terrible one, Jer. 10. 25. Pour out thy fury, thine indignation, upon the heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name. It is an imprecation; but what is imprecated by an inspired person, is denounced by that God that inspires him. It is very true indeed, that families are frequently taken in a larger sense, sometimes they signify nations: but both being put together in the text, it is manifestly the design of the Holy Ghost to notify to us irreligious families, composing and making up irreligious nations. For what is a profane, carnal nation and people made up of? Heathen and nations are all one. When nations then are first mentioned, and afterwards families; it is plain, they are mentioned as constituent parts of atheistical, ungodly, and irreligious nations. And when it is said, "Pour out thy fury upon such;" it signifies a denunciation of divine fury upon such. Dismal, horrid clouds of wrath hang over such families, that will be discharged in terrible destructive storms.

But beside what may be thus collected from precepts, which are expressly so, or virtual, implied ones; we shall proceed to evince this to you,

[2.] From recommended examples in Scripture; examples in reference to one or the other, or both of those parts of family-religion already mentioned, family-instruction, or family-prayer. And one, or the other, or sometimes both together, we find recommended examples of, as ancient as we have any records whatsoever.

The religion at first, that began so early in the world, that of sacrificing, which could never be without invocation, could

but be domestical: whether you look back as high as Abel, or look forward at your leisure. Do but peruse the short history of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in all their several commorations and commigrations; you hear of their settling no where, or removing no whither, but there was presently an altar built for worship, and for calling on the name of the Lord. You have a treatise on those passages, called "A family altar," written by a worthy servant of Christ, Mr. Oliver Heywood; which would be of singular use for those who have a mind to peruse a short book on this subject. You read of two altars set up, in one chapter, upon a twofold removal of that great saint Abraham: at such a place he pitcheth, and there he builds an altar. And by and by to such a place he removes, and there he places an altar for calling on the name of the Lord, for the solemn worship of his family. Gen. 12. 7, 8. So you find it afterwards, to be with Isaac, and Jacob in their removals, or in their settlings, this way or that, or in this place or that.

That instance also of Job is very considerable to this purpose; who, in the absence of his sons and daughters offers sacrifices for them, Job. 1. 5. Which could never be unaccompanied with solemn invocation and calling upon God. And thus, it is said, he did continually. It was a stated course with him; he did not omit it, when they were absent; for he must be understood to have a great family about him even then. And it is implied to have been his stated course, whether his children were with him or not; he kept up a course of family-religion all along.

That action of David, though I do not find it taken notice of by others, seems to me to be mighty observable to this purpose; that in the history given us of his bringing home of the ark to the place which he had appointed for it, we find how greatly he was transported with the solemnity of that action and undertaking. But when all that was over, which was public and solemn, we are told, that he retired at length to bless his household, 2 Sam. 6, 20. He went home to bless his household. Nothing is more probable, than that this was a stated course with him; and that he had so contrived and ordered the work of that public solemnity, as that it might not interfere with the worship of his family: and therefore, amidst all the great pompous triumph, wherein he was more publicly engaged, upon this account he bethinks himself; "Well now my hour of prayer is come at home;" and so the matter was prudently ordered, that that solemnity being over, he might return home to perform the ordinary duty that was to be done there, that is, to bless his household, and call upon the name of the Lord there. If you compare this with

that which was his declared resolution, in psalm 101. 2. "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way;—I will walk within my house with a perfect heart;" "I will keep an even steady course, there shall be no baulks, no ups and downs in my way in my family;" undoubtedly meaning a way of religion. If you compare, I say, that resolution, with his sudden bethinking himself, when he had been engaged in that great solemnity but now mentioned, "Now the time is come that I must go home and bless my house;" it appears to have been a stated thing with him.

If from thence you look further to that great instance of Daniel; when he was, though a great prince in another land, yet an exile from his own; and that terrible and severe interdict was published, that for thirty days no man should pray to God or man, but to the prince of those countries only; (a snare purposely laid for Daniel's life,) you read, that he went on in his course, as he was wont to do, as it is expressly said; and no doubt but those wretched conspirators against his life knew his course, otherwise they could not have laid this snare for him. And how should they know it? It is said, Dan. 6. 10. He went into his house, and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks unto his God, as he did aforetime. It was a stated course with him. And that this must be family-prayer, and the ordinary religion of his household, is the most reasonable supposition imaginable. For otherwise, if it were secret closet-prayer, how should it be known to have been his course before? and how should they be able to accuse him now? But consider him as a great prince in a foreign country, and as having a family, and how heroic and generous a resolution he had taken up, and with how holy a fortitude and bravery of spirit, to own God against that insolent decree of the wicked creatures who would arrogate that honour to the prince that was only due to God. Considering all these things, it is with the greatest reason imaginable to be supposed, that this was a stated course with him of family-religion. He resolved, that his worship should be, as it was aforetime, open in his house. And thereupon the advantage was taken against him.

The instance of the centurion is very observable, and observed by many, in Acts 10. 2. He is said to be a devout man, a religious man, that feared God, (that is an ordinary expression to signify worship; he was a worshipper of God,) with all his house. He was a worshipping person, and his family a worshipping family: "And he prayed unto God alway." Afterwards you read in the chapter, that at the time when the an-

gel appeared to him, he was praying in his house, (ver. 30.) house being put for household, as is ordinary. He was praying in his family in his ordinary course; and there he had the benign appearance of that kind messenger from heaven, to direct him to the way, by which he might come to a more distinct knowledge of the Mediator, and of worshipping God in Christ. According to the light he had, and the sincerity that God had given him in proportion thereunto, his acceptance above was declared before. But God resolved to help him, in the method and way which he most approved, unto more distinct notices; and these he is directed how to come by, even at the time when he was engaged in his domestic performances of religion in his house.

We need not farther to insist for the eviction of this truth in the general, that there ought to be such a thing as family-religion. It were easy, if necessary, to add to all these considerations, (and it ought to have some weight,) the accounts that we otherwise have of the practice of the primitive church, in those earlier times of it whereof we have any account, since the completing of the canon of Scripture. That is, we are told by some of the ancients, and in some of the early centuries, of the twofold social prayer that was in common use among them, family-prayer and church-prayer, or prayer in their church-assemblies. We are told, what things they were wont to insist upon in prayer. Besides the spiritual blessings, which they continually and daily sought, and apprehended themselves to need, they were wont to pray for the lives of the emperors that ruled over them, though they were then pagans. And this (saith that ancient author,) was their constant practice, both in their prayers in public assemblies, and in their own houses.

Having gone through what I thought fit to offer in proof of the substance of family-religion, that there ought to be such a thing; I shall only hint this to you for a close; That the great thing, which will either facilitate or obstruct a general compliance with the mind of God in this matter, will be the consideration that men shall have of their families, that is, whether they will consider them as constitutions for this world, or for the world to come. If you can but agree with yourselves, under which of these notions to look upon your families; accordingly your compliance with the mind of God in this matter will either be facile or difficult.

It is true, we are to have a very distinct consideration of the nature of societies, from the ends of them. There are societies, that in their design, and consequently in their nature, are purely civil: and others, that in their design, and conse-

quently in their nature and constitution, are purely sacred. Of the former sort are kingdoms and nations and incorporate towns, and the like; they are in their very nature, because they are from their ends, purely civil. There are those that are purely sacred, as churches; the very end and design, upon which they are collected, is worship and religion. But now families are the elements of both these sorts of societies; that is, both churches and commonwealths are made up of families. Therefore both these must meet in a family, religion, and civil and secular business; for the other societies, some whereof are purely sacred, others purely civil, do arise out of families. Persons are elements of families; families are the elements, of which both churches and kingdoms or commonwealths are composed and made up. And as the one sort of these is purely civil, the other purely sacred; that which is elementary unto both, must be both. And therefore now, when any come to turn this matter in their thoughts, "I am the head of a family; but what sort of society is my family? Is it made purely for this world, or for the world to come?" Sure, where the consideration of both worlds meet, the other world should be superior or uppermost; and therefore all things must be measured there with subserviency and reference to that. But if any will say, "No; families are made only for this world;" then I would ask, What is this world made for? Is it made for nothing? Or is it made for itself, to centre in itself, and to be its own end? You can never avoid it, but that families must be supremely and ultimately made for the other world; and then they are made for religion principally and chiefly. And no man can behave himself well in any station or relation in a family, that doth not let this thought lie deep in his mind; "My family, as well as others, is a constitution made for religion, as well as for other businesses." For where both meet, that must certainly be principal.

SERMON IV.*

IN speaking of family-religion, the method proposed was, to evince the obligation to it, in reference to the substance of the thing, and then in reference to the frequency of it.

I. To the substance of the thing; that there ought to be such a thing as family-religion. The two last discourses † have been employed in the proof of this. We proceed to speak somewhat also,

II. To the more doubted frequency of such religious exercises, as lie within the compass of families, or whereof families are to be the stated seats: how often, or at what seasons such family-worship ought to be. And in reference to this,

1. I would suggest some few things, by way of preparation. As,

(1.) That it will greatly concern us all to get an habitual spirituality inwrought into the temper of our souls, in order to our making a right judgment of this matter; when, at what time, how often we ought to apply ourselves to the exercises of such family-religion. If there be a frame of spirit suitable to the general rules of practical religion and godliness, the determination of this matter will be very easy. But if there be a prevailing carnality, nothing will be more difficult. And let me in this but appeal to your own reason, to that common understanding that belongs to us as we are an intelligent sort of creatures: that is, you would be loath in other instances to

* Preached December 31, 1693 † See page 392, &c.

commit any cause, wherein you are concerned, especially if your all were concerned in it, to the judgment of an enemy, if you could help it. But "the carnal mind is enmity against God;" not only an enemy, but enmity itself. And I beseech you, do you think, that an enemy to God can be your friend? Therefore let not a carnal mind make a judgment in this case; whatsoever you do, let it not be judged by that measure; but labour to get an habitual spirituality inwrought into your souls, and then the judgment of this case will lie very easy.

(2.) We should look upon family-religion, not merely under the notion of a duty, and as imposed; but as a privilege and a singular vouchsafement of grace, that there may be such a thing; that God will be invocated, or even mentioned in our families, in the families of such wretched creatures as we, who inhabit the dark and dismal region of this lower world; that God will have worship ascend and go up to him from off our earth, and out of our houses and families. Look upon it as a marvellous vouchsafement of grace; and that will greatly facilitate the determination of this case also. And nothing can be more opprobrious to us than not to think so: that, when God doth so far vouchsafe to let his tabernacle be with men on earth; "Every tabernacle of yours shall be my tabernacle; if you consent, if you do not shut me out, you shall no where have a tabernacle but what shall be mine; I, the high and lofty One that inhabit eternity, am content to cohabit with you, and to have your house for my sanctuary." What a vouchsafement is this! and how opprobrious a thing not to count it so!

It hath been accounted so, even in the very Pagan world. A divine presence, to have a *præsto numen*, a *numen* at hand and ready, how great a privilege hath it been reckoned! In the dark and dismal days of popery, when that hath been *regnant*, what a terrible thing hath it been accounted to excommunicate a nation; to put it under an interdict, that there should be no religion in that nation? Our own records tell us, how such a thing hath been understood and resented in this land in former days. And if we look farther and farther back into the days of paganism, I remember Cæsar in his commentaries * tells us, that the ancient Gauls did reckon

* Si quis aut privatus aut publicus, eorum (nempe druidum) decreto non steterit, sacrificiis interdicunt. Hæc pœna apud eos est gravissima. Quibus ita est interdictum, ii numero impiorum ac sceleratorum habentur; iis omnes decedunt, aditum eorum sermonemque defugiunt, ne quid ex contagione incommodi accipiant: neque iis petentibus jus redditur, neque honos ullus communicatur. Cæsar. de Bell, Gallic, L. 6, sect. 13, edit, Cler.

no more terrible punishment could be put upon them, than to be interdicted the sacrifices. And by that means it was, that their *Arch-flamens* ruled over them; they were mere absolute governors among that people, because if they would not be prescribed to and directed by them in every case, if they would not suffer them to take up all controversies among them, they would presently forbid them the sacrifices; than which no penalty was reckoned more, nor any so grievous.

Now let us consider the matter so. What if instead of being bidden to pray in our families, we should be forbidden to pray in them! Make but that fearful supposition, to see how it will relish with you. Suppose there should be a particular interdict upon your house; suppose by some special signification of the mind of God from heaven it should be said, "I will allow all the neighbouring houses to call upon me, but I will have no worship out of your house; let all the rest in the street worship me, and I will hear and accept them, but from your house, I will accept no sacrifice, I will hear no prayer." What a terrible doom were this! What a dark and horrid cloud would be drawn over that habitation, if it should be said, "Here shall be no prayer, here shall be no mention of the name of God!" So that, as in a like case represented to us in reference to the people of the Jews, the poor forlorn members of that family should say, "We may not make mention of the name of the Lord." Amos 6. 10. What a dismal thing were this! Labour but to get your souls possessed with the apprehension, that the liberty of family-worship is a great privilege; and let that be forelaid in your minds, when you come to determine with yourselves about the frequency, how often we shall solace ourselves with this gracious vouchsafement of God from heaven unto us. Then it will be no hard thing to determine. And take this also,

(3.) That in reference to the determination of this matter, the same consideration is to be had of family-religion, that we formerly told you was to be had of religion in general; that is, that it ought to be considered, either as a homage to God, or as an advantage to ourselves. And so it will be easy hence to determine, that the exercise of family-religion ought to be so frequent, as religion considered under this twofold notion doth require; as frequent as a homage to God is to be paid, and as our own spiritual advantage is to be sought: as frequently as that can be in consistency with the other necessary affairs of human life. For indeed nothing is plainer, and that therefore must with less hesitancy be granted, then that nothing can be at that time necessary, when that which is inconsistent with it

is truly necessary. That must be acknowledged. But then there is a great deal of caution to be used in judging of this necessity, that shall exclude for this or that time so great a thing as a solemn exercise of religion out of a family. It must be a great thing, that shall prevail to exclude that.

But let me ask myself the question; "I am one that oweth a homage to God, and so doth my family. When do I not owe it? And when doth my family not owe it; so that if I have opportunity, consistent with the other necessary occasions of human life, that opportunity should not be taken?" And whereas religion, and so family-religion, is a means of advantage to ourselves and them, as well as a homage to God; when can it be said, I stand in no need of the exercises of religion, or that those under my care do not, when those exercises can be had consistently with the other necessary occasions of human life? These things being premonished,

2. I shall now offer somewhat by way of determination of the propounded case. As,

(1.) Nothing is plainer, than that the exercises of family-religion ought to be daily. That seems out of all question. Every day will I bless thee. Psalm 145. 2. A synecdochical expression of religion; and that cannot be understood for any reason reaching a particular person, which will not reach a family too. And so the same thing is to be said to that in psalm 141. 2. Let my prayer be set before thee as incense; (that was stated solemn prayer;) and the uplifting of my hands as the evening sacrifice. That is; every evening let it go up as incense. That was a *juge sacrificium*, a daily solemnity. So look to that direction given us by our Lord, to pray for our *daily* bread, day by day. He tieth us not indeed to the use of those very words. So the instruction being given occasionally, plainly enough signifieth, that he did not intend this direction as a form; but that he directs it only as a summary or a form to be used with Christian wisdom and understanding, in enlarging upon the particulars contained in that prayer, and to guide and direct ourselves hereby in our solemn addresses unto God. Though also the use of these very words, as they lie, no body can doubt to be lawful; yet, that they are enjoined, and so made necessary, there is little reason to affirm. But however, take them as a general direction in reference unto prayer; they signify that the things to be prayed for are to be daily prayed for. "Give us this day our daily bread:" this day. At the same time, when we pray for all other things contained in that prayer, we are to pray too for daily bread. And that this is

meant of social prayer, and that this direction is given to the disciples with reference to their praying together, to let them know what things they should insist upon in prayer; is made more than probable by the form of speech. For, when our Saviour was directing secret or closet prayer, Mat. 6. 6. then he saith *thou:* "Thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and shut thy door," &c. But when he cometh to give this direction concerning prayer, he saith, *Ye.* He speaks to them in the plural number; and directs them to speak in the plural number, "Our father," &c. And therefore, that it was social prayer, about which he giveth this direction; the prayer of such as could daily pray together; that seems most evident; and therefore also that such exercises of religion ought to be daily.

(2.) Such exercises of religion ought to be every day more than once. We read sometimes of thrice in a day. Psalm 55. 17. Evening and morning, and at noon will I pray, and cry aloud; and he shall hear my voice. This in all likelihood must refer too to family-prayer. He speaks of crying with his voice, a loud voice. And so the before-mentioned instance of Daniel, which seems most likely to be meant of family-religion, the prayer or religion of his family; was with him thrice a day. And indeed so it cannot but be in religious families; that is, that at least at noon there will be solemn invocation of God in reference to the use of his creatures; which, the apostle saith, "are good, if they be received with thanksgiving, but they are sanctified by the word of God and prayer." 1 Tim. 4. 4, 5. There must be prayer to sanctify the creatures; or else they are unholy things to you, profane things. It is unhallowed meat and drink. And therefore,

(3.) I doubt not, it is with a great deal of reason, and from Scripture-light too to be determined, that the exercises of religion ought to be statedly twice a day; that is, with greater solemnity. This is spoken of as a most comely and becoming thing, a thing that carries its own goodness along with it, (psalm 92. 1, 2.) "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most high; (giving of thanks being one essential part of prayer:) to shew forth thy loving-kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night." There can be no reason assigned, why this should concern one particular person, more than why it should concern every person: no more, why it should concern the master of a family alone, than those under his care. If the reason of the thing extend to a family as such, the thing itself ought to extend to a family as such. That is, with serious and apprehensive

minds and spirits to convene and meet together, to give God his due acknowledgment for his loving-kindness every morning, and his faithfulness every night.

And you see, how the Psalmist represents this case in psalm 42. 8. The Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life. Observe, how his νυχθημεραι, his days and nights, were composed and made up, by the continual meeting together of God's loving-kindness, and of his prayer and song every day, and every night, morning and evening; so it is to be understood. "Thy loving-kindness, and my prayer and praise shall meet one another. So shall my mornings and evenings be continually made up of that grateful contexture, of mercy and loving-kindness on thy part, and of prayer and praise on mine." But this cannot concern a particular person upon any reason, but upon which it will equally concern his family, that religious exercises should be there in a stated and continual course.

I may farther reason this matter by some few considerations.

Suppose any will admit, (which in itself is sufficiently evident,) that it is a very reasonable thing and manifestly the mind of God, that there should be daily exercises of religion in our families; then I would fain know, which should be excluded, if you would have one excluded? The Lord saith, morning and night; which would you have excluded? The morning, or the evening sacrifice?

Would you exclude the morning exercise of religion? Pray how dare you think of that? Would not you desire God's blessing on your family this day? Would you not have the labours of the several members of it to be prospered and succeeded this day? Ask yourselves seriously that question; do not you desire a blessing should descend this morning upon your family as such? Again, do not you know, that this world is a place of snares and temptations? How dare you adventure your sons and daughters and servants into the world, without praying down a blessing upon them, before they go forth or set about their business? Suppose a disaster should happen, suppose a member of your family should be drawn into some scandalous wickedness; would it not be an uncomfortable reflection, "I ventured them out without family-prayer; see what comes of it. Here is a blot and disgrace brought upon my family; was not this owing to my self-confidence, to neglect of God? was it not, because I was content to let mine go out abroad unblest? I forgot, that the world, the persons or things that they might have to do with, were

all full of snares; this was not considered and taken to heart, and God hath let such a blast befal me or mine upon this account."

Or would you omit the evening exercise of religion in your family, of one sort and another? How can you think of that? Do you need none to watch over you this night? Doth not your house need a better keeper than you can be, especially when you are asleep; the Keeper of Israel, who neither slumbereth nor sleepeth? when we dwell in the midst of continual dangers, as we have so frequent experience; when some, that went to bed possessed of comfortable habitations, are unhoused and outed of all by the morning? It is not pretended, that family-prayer or family-religion will be a certain protection of your habitations from such disasters; as experience hath from time to time shewn: but I would appeal to you concerning the difference; suppose such a calamity to befal a religious family, and suppose it to befal an impious ungodly family. On the one hand, "My family hath been the seat of religion; I have desired, that God might be served and honoured there: of this I have been studious to the uttermost;" How free and easy is the way of access to God, when such a person is not affrighted by guilt, and the horrors of an amazed conscience! But on the other side, to be forced to say; "I can look for no relief from God in this case, for I have neglected him, I have forsaken him and banished him my house and habitation; he had no abode or dwelling with me, no acknowledgment or worship from me and mine:" What will this issue in? But if there be no such bar in the way between God and us; "Now my habitation is consumed, and turned into flames and ashes, I have no dwelling; but thanks be to God, the secret of the divine presence lieth open to me; I can go to him and say, Lord, thou hast been thy people's habitation through all generations. I shall never be destitute of a dwelling, as long as I have such a God to go to, and may solace myself in his love." For he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him. How unsolicitous will that heart be, that finds itself possessed of a dwelling in the divine love! That love will carry through all the straits and difficulties of time, and provide richly for us in an immense eternity that shall ensue. This makes a vast difference betwixt one that serveth the Lord and one that serveth him not.

Farther; How are we directed by the course of nature itself? Do you think that those diurnal alterations of day and night carry no signification with them to an intelligent sort of creatures? When it is so inculcated to us in Scripture, what sa-

cred things those ordinances of day and night are, and the statedness of their succession to one another; what can this intend, but to give us a measure as to the exercises of religion? Why else should this be so much insisted on, and we be called to fix our eye and take more special notice of those two great luminaries in this world of ours, "the sun that rules by day, and the moon that rules by night?" We are taught by nature itself to shape our other affairs accordingly. "Thou makest darkness, and it is night:—The sun ariseth;—Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour, until the evening." Psalm 104. 20, 22, 23. May he indeed do so, and shall he not take God along with him? And when the return of night calls him back from his affairs; ought he not then to be put in mind, who must be his keeper while he slumbers and sleeps, even that Keeper that never slumbers nor sleeps?

That it might be more expressly signified unto us, how nature may and should be a measure unto us of religion, as to this thing; do but take notice of that passage in Amos 5. 8. Seek him, (though these words, "seek him," are not in the Hebrew text in this verse, yet they are in the words but a little before, in several verses, and it is plain ought to be repeated or understood here, as the sense itself dictateth: "Seek ye me, and ye shall live; Seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba; Seek the Lord and ye shall live; seek him, that made the seven stars and orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night," &c. Seek him that doth so and so; what is the meaning of that? Seek him, because he doth so and so; seek him under that notion, as it is he that maketh the day dark with night, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning. What stupid, insensible creatures shall we be, if so wonderful a change doth not instruct us! If such a change were not common, it would be a subject of the greatest wonder to us. But that is the infirmity of our minds, that great things are little regarded, because they are common. That there should be that steady course kept in nature, as to make so vast a change in the world within the space of twenty-four hours, as the vicissitudes of day and night, of light and darkness; that we should have the brightness of an orient sun illustrating our hemisphere, and that within so many hours it is gone, and the shadow of death covers it; certainly this should set all religious minds upon adoring that Author of nature, that doth this in so steady a course, and in a way so unspeakably above all human conception, and which makes so many indeterminable controversies and disputes among the

wisest philosophers, that are never like to be decided as long as this world lasts; particularly, whether it be the earth that successively moves to the sun, or whether it be the sun that is whirled about the earth. The latter of these is so unapprehensible a thing, that the sun should run so vast a circle in so little a space of time, that it hath made many very considering men more to incline to the other opinion. But that we should be compassed about daily, once in twenty-four hours, with the strange vicissitudes of day and night, and not be disposed thereupon to adoration, is a most unaccountable thing; and will speak the inhabitants of this earth to be as stupid, as the earth on which they dwell.

But the idolatry of pagans will be a testimony against christians, if it should be so. What tempted them to that idolatrous notion of worshipping the sun and moon, but that they thought them to be a sort of deities, from whom they received such a continual course of favours, that they thought they did owe continual adoration to them thereupon? If they falsely thought so, how truly and justly should we do what they have thought, if we reckon that the God of heaven and earth, of sun and moon, and of the whole creation, doth in such wisdom and in such kindness and benignity to us provide, that there should be so necessary an alteration, as this of light and darkness in so continued a course?

What then doth this require and call for from us? To seek the Lord upon this account, the Lord that maketh the day dark with night, and that turneth the shadow of death into the morning. He doth even impose upon us those daily acknowledgments and acts of worship morning and evening, by the very course and current of nature itself, as he is the Author and God of nature. And wonder not, that the light and law of nature is so often appealed unto in this case. It is what we find the apostle does in a matter of far less import, than this that is now before us; when he speaks about the business of hair. 1 Cor. 11. 14. Surely we are to act according to the unerring plain dictates of nature, in so great and important a matter as this is, much more.

I might farther add upon all this that general precept, Phil. 4. 8. "Whatsoever things are honest, *comely*, whatsoever things are lovely, of good report, think on these things." What a lovely thing is a praying, orderly family! a family, where religion is kept up in a stated course, so as that that course is as constant as the course of day and night! It is not left to us as a mere arbitrary thing, whether we will do things lovely, comely, honest and of good report, yea or no; but as a necessary

thing, founded upon necessary reasons. And therefore to be unconcerned and indifferent, whether those of our family (if we have families,) do things so necessary, or not, is a contradiction in terms; for it is to say, that which is necessary is not necessary; or, it is an indifferent thing, whether that which is necessary be done or not done.

SERMON V*.

HAVING endeavoured to evince to you, that there ought to be such a thing as family-religion; and then to show you, what we were to conceive and practice, as to the frequency of the exercises of it, or when and at what times it ought to be performed; I would farther speak to a *question* or two relating to this matter, and answer one or two *objections*, and so shut up all with some *Use*.

There are some *questions* that occur, which may require some consideration.

Question 1. Some have desired to be informed, "Whether in case of the absence or sickness of a husband from or in the family, it be incumbent on the wife to keep up family-duty in such a case?" And the case is the same as to widows, or others of that sex, who are sole governesses of families.

Answer. It must be said in general to this, that one rule cannot be suited to all cases. There may be very great variety, as circumstances differ. But,

1. Nothing is plainer, than that while the conjugal relatives remain, the female relation hath a real part in the government of the family. That is plainly enough asserted in 1 Tim. 5. 14. that it is the woman's part to "guide the house." The word οἰκοδεσποτειν, *to have a despotical power in the family*, a go-

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verning power; which must be solely in her in the absence or failure of the other relative: and that must by no means be abandoned or quitted. And whereas all power and all order is from God, it cannot be denied or disowned or laid aside without an injury to him.

2. Hereupon, if there be in a family a prudent pious son, or a prudent pious man-servant, who may be assigned to this work; it may fitly enough be done by such a one by her appointment. And so the authority that belongs to her in her station, is preserved, and the thing done. That such a work as that is may be assigned to another, is out of all doubt, and ought to be so, where it may most fitly and most duly be so. And none question the fitness of assigning such a work statedly to another, in such families where persons are kept on purpose for the discharge of family-duties.

3. It is possible, there may be families, that do entirely at present consist of those that are of the female sex: and concerning them there is no question.

4. Where the family is more numerous, and consists of the male sex, of whom none are fit or willing to undertake that business, and it cannot be done by the governess with decency or to edification; in that case she is to follow the example of Esther, (a very laudable one,) with her maidens and younger children still to keep up to this worship in her family; and, as much as in her lies, to warn and charge the rest, that they be not omissive for their part, (though they do not concur with them,) together or severally in calling on the name of the Lord daily.

Question II. A second question, that occurs in this case, is, "Whether, where there is no competent ability to perform such a duty, as that of family-prayer, with decency and edifyingness; it be fit to make use of helps, the preconceived words of others?"

Answer. As to that, the matter seems to me so plain, that we need make no long discourse about it. I make no question at all, but that the substance of every duty is to take place of circumstance. It is better that the duty be done, than that upon the account of a mere circumstance it should be omitted and let alone. And there are useful helps, such as "The Practice of Piety" and other good books contain in them, which may fitly be made use of for that purpose; provided, that they be not rested in, or that there be not a design of taking up there.

But persons in that case are more to study the Scriptures, the excellencies and attributes of the divine nature, the natures and offices of Christ; to acquaint themselves with the parti-

cular office of the Holy Ghost, as he is the Spirit of grace and supplication; and to study their own hearts more, and to consider what are their true necessities. And in time, if people do conscientiously labour to make themselves acquainted with these things, and especially to get a sense upon their own hearts of their own true and great spiritual necessities; that will easily furnish them with matter, and matter will dictate words. Every one can tell, how eloquent necessity is wont to make beggars, that are pinched with want and hunger; they do not use to want words to represent their case. And for a more special help in this matter, if any such as make it a matter of doubt, would but allow themselves the leisure and give themselves the trouble, (but shall any call it a trouble? they should not account it so, if they did the thing;) to peruse Bishop Wilkins's treatise about "The Gift of Prayer;" they would there see, not only what the judgment of so great a man was, concerning the best and most eligible way of managing our addresses to God in prayer; but how also an ability may be obtained through the grace and blessing of God, for applying ourselves in the name and on the behalf of others to God in prayer.

But there is yet an *objection* or two, that needs to be considered.

Objection, I. Some will say perhaps, "That they *want time*, and that their necessary secular affairs cannot admit of time for a stated course of family-worship, morning and evening." As there can be no reason, as you have heard, alleged for the one of these times, that will not be as weighty for the other; to this I have several things to say in answer,

1. It would be a very great piece of justice, if such, as are wont so to object, would but represent the case, as truly it is; that is, that they would rather say, they want hearts, than that they want time. Undoubtedly, where there is a bent of heart right set in this matter, time will be found; it will not be a difficulty to find it.

2. I would fain know of such, why they do not object too, that they cannot find time to have solemn meals in their families, set meals; that they cannot find time for eating or drinking, no, nor for sleeping: But are these things more necessary than religion? What is become of their understanding? How forlorn an understanding is that grown, that can apprehend a necessity for set and appointed seasons for repast and the repairing of natural decays, and cannot apprehend a necessity of constant family-religion, or seem to think of that as a matter less necessary? Will they pretend to believe, that they have souls, immortal spirits about them; and that an immortal

mind or spirit is a more valuable thing than a clod of clay? Do we need to make speeches to christians or to men for such purposes as these? Therefore I add again,

3. It is very true, that nothing is at that time necessary, when somewhat inconsistent therewith is truly necessary. That is a concession, that must be stated and established, for it cannot be shaken. And therefore we are to take our measures, not against it, but by it, and according to it. For in morality it is impossible that necessaries should be repugnant one to another, any more than that truths can; that one duty to be practised should be contrary to another duty, than that one truth to be believed should be contrary to another truth. They are all of a family, of a kind and alliance, and very easily reconcilable with one another. But as we formerly had occasion to mind you, so I must remind you, that it is a good man's character, that he "orders his affairs with discretion." If men will do this, they will then find out ways and methods, how to reconcile their important necessary affairs with one another.

There are cases, wherein even a religious duty itself must yield and give place to other necessary occurrences. It may not only in some cases be lawful, but a duty, to intermit the course of family-duty in the ordinary season thereof. As, suppose a person be taken with a sudden, surprising fit, that endangers life, and requires the present attendance of all the house; or suppose my house be on fire, or my neighbour's house. The strict observance of the religion of the sabbath-day was among the Jews dispensed with upon a less occasion, when there was but an ox or a sheep to be pulled out of a ditch.

But if any will pretend such necessary occasions to be constant, then the pretence overthrows itself; that they must constantly or in an ordinary course exclude religion out of their families upon account of their constant or ordinary secular business. If this be pretended, the very pretence sheweth it to be a false necessity, or the false pretence of a necessity; and so is a pretence, that doth overthrow itself even in the allegation. This is none of those cases, to which that great maxim is applicable, that "God will have mercy, and not sacrifice." Such cases there are; but these cannot be constant: for then there could be no such thing as sacrifice; that is, religion upon these terms must quite be thrown out of doors and out of the world.

4. I would appeal to yourselves, or to ordinary observation, whether it be not evident that there are many instances in former and latter time, that make it manifest, that there may be diligence in a calling, and great success upon such diligence;

and yet no exclusion of family-religion, but that kept up in great constancy and order? I believe you, or most of you, can instance in many such observable cases. And if I should instance them to you, many of you would upon knowledge consent and concur with me.

I doubt not, but that many of you have seen the life of that famous man Mr. Ignatius Jordan, who fifty or sixty years ago was a magistrate and sometimes mayor of the noted city of Exeter. I mention him; because, besides his extant life, I have had opportunities to converse with some, that lived a considerable time in his family; and who did assure me, that his daily course was to go to bed early, and to take care that his family should do so too. Then generally he was up first of all the house; usually at four o'clock in the morning, both winter and summer. Two hours he commonly spent alone in his secret devotions. About six o'clock, it was his usual way to call his family together, and to spend a considerable time in the serious exercises of religion among them: and so all went with great order about their several affairs and businesses about seven. A very signal instance of the easy reconcilableness (by the use of discretion and prudence,) of religion with secular business! And an instance too, how discernible a blessing did ensue and follow upon all; so as to leave it no matter of objection against religion, that it must impoverish the families into which it comes.

Nor should I doubt the concurrence of more of you, if I should instance in the known conduct of alderman Ashurst*. I have had opportunity myself to know much of the order of his family in this respect, as to the daily exercises of religion in it. And I think his posterity left behind are a sufficient proof to you, that religion doth not beggar a family.

I mention these instances, not as if I thought an opulent condition in the world to be any considerable part of the reward of religion, or any constant reward of it. That were to dishonour religion, to think that we should need to mention so mean a thing, as outward and worldly prosperity, wealth and riches, as the recompence and reward of religion. There are much greater things to be mentioned, the secret blessing of God upon a man's spirit: the hoped blessing, that may descend upon one's relatives: the peace, that a man shall have in his own bosom, from the consideration of his not having the blood of souls on his head, the blood of children, and the blood of servants, for not having taken care of their souls: the instruc-

* The father of Sir Henry Ashurst, Bart. and of Sir William Ashurst, Knt. Lord-Mayor of London in 1693, when these sermons were preached.

tive good remembrance, that such a one will leave behind him; which may be of use to others, when he is dead and gone: the glory, that he brings to God: the eternal recompences that sincere religion will find at the last: the present pleasure and satisfaction, that a man will have, while he survives, where God blesseth his endeavours; and where he can see godly children springing up under the influence of godliness practised and kept up in the family; or a godly servant becoming or made such under his eye, though it was not always so; it may be, he may see such a child or servant gone out of his family, and planting other families. What a comfort is it to the heart of a man in such a case, to see the godly, praying parent and master of such another family; who must say, he carried his religion out of my family, and that God blessed the worship and religion of my house so to season his spirit, that I can reckon such or such a religious family springing out of mine! What a comfort is this!

But what I speak of worldly emolument, (as sometimes by the especial blessing of God a consequent, though not a necessary or constant consequent of family-religion,) hath this farther design—That if this be the case with any of you, that you are descended of godly parents, and sprung out of families where religion was kept up, and there is a blessing descended upon you in outward respects also; if God hath enlarged your portion as to the things of this life, and with that blessing hath blessed you indeed; then I reckon the mention of such instances may be useful to such as you in this respect; that you may take encouragement and understand your engagement from thence to keep up the religion which you find hath not been a useless disadvantageous thing to your family.—Religion hath not dishonoured your families, nor you: do not you dishonour it; be not ashamed of the religion of your fathers, who have gone before you in this way and course. In the last place as to the objection of want of time, I would add, that

5. It ought deeply to be considered, whether more time might not be redeemed, not only from such occasions as are in a degree necessary, but from such as are altogether unnecessary; and this without any prejudice to health? Where such an allegation is used and stood upon, certainly one half hour without any great prejudice might be gained from sleep by rising so much the earlier in the morning. But as that may be said to be a gaining and sparing of time from that which is necessary, how much more may be gained from that which is unnecessary? And about that I must appeal to yourselves; I know not other people's circumstances, but every one is sup-

posed to know his own: and so yourselves know, whether some time might not be spared from the coffee-house, or from unseasonable visits, at that hour of the day that would be most fit for the religion and worship of your family. I can but appeal to yourselves, whether it may not be so.

I know, it may possibly be alleged in a particular case; if it be asked, "Why were you not at a more seasonable hour about the exercises of religion in your family?" Why, "I was obliged to observe such an appointment with such a one about business in a coffee-house or a tavern." But I would inquire; Is it necessary, that this must be constantly so, or more ordinarily so? Or can it not be provided, that such meetings might be at more seasonable hours, so as not to exclude family-duty in its proper season; that is, to occasion it either to be quite laid aside, or (which may be as culpable,) to be deferred to so late an hour of the day or night, (for the greatest danger of this kind is in the evening,) till every one naturally is more disposed to sleep, than to prayer or to hear God's word read or opened to them? Might it not be managed otherwise? And then may I not appeal to you, whether this be not an affront to the majesty of God? According to that which is urged by the prophet Malachi, (chap. 1. 13.) "When ye bring that which was torn, and the lame and the sick for an offering, should I accept this at your hands? saith the Lord." Or, as in ver. 8. "Is not such a sacrifice evil? Offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee?" It is to offer God an affront, instead of a sacrifice; the worship of a carcase, instead of a living sacrifice or service. It speaks your contempt of the divine Majesty, when you dare ordinarily presume to do so; instead of that reverence which ought to animate all your worship.

And therefore about this, no other course can be taken by one who shall preach to you upon such an occasion, but only to leave you to serious communing about this matter between God and your own souls. Bring the case before him, and consider your rule, and consider your judge; for you are not to be final judges; nor are you to judge arbitrarily in a subordinate way, but by rule.

Consider, I say, the rules you are to judge by, what such laws as these lay upon us. Whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God, 1 Cor. 10. 31. Can you go to God in in this case, and say, "Lord, I appeal to thee, who knowest all things, whether I was not about business at the coffee-house or tavern, which did more tend to glorify thee, than inspecting my family would then have done; than reading out of thy holy word or calling upon thy name would then have done."

We are required to do all that we do in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, Col. 3. 17. A most awful thought that! This is to run through our lives, to do all we do in the name of our Lord Jesus. Nor is it an unreasonable thing, that this law should be laid upon us. For by whose vouchsafement and procurement is it, that we have a being in this world? It is "by him that all things consist." This world, if it had not been for him, would have been pulled in pieces about the ears of its inhabitants many a year ago. It was said concerning Joseph, exalted in that high trust in Egypt; and it was said to him by the prince upon the throne, "Without thee shall no man lift up his hand or his foot in all the land of Egypt." Gen. 41. 44. If God say so concerning him, of whom Joseph was but a type, our glorious blessed Lord; "The creation is given to thee, it might have been all made to vanish into nothing long ago, but it is now devolved into thy hands; be thou absolute Arbiter of life and death, and of all concernments to this whole creation; All power is given to thee in heaven and in earth:" This being the state of the case, it is not an unreasonable law that I now mention, that whatsoever ye do in word or deed, ye should do all in the name of Christ; you have nothing to do in this world, but in his name. Now can you go by this rule, and say, "Lord, it was in the name of Jesus Christ, that I thought myself more concerned to mind such and such businesses at a public house at such an hour in the evening, rather than the business of my family in the exercises of religion; rather than in reasoning, and in opening and urging the Scriptures to them, and calling on thy name with them?" Let these things be considered in the fear of God; and not like persons that mean to trifle in matters, wherein God will not trifle with us one day. I need to do no more, than to leave such cases to a communing between God and your own souls. If you will let the matter be heard there, it will bring the case before God, and the appeal will be made to him about it. But if you will judge the matter without hearing, and as the sole judges, when you are no way so but in subordination; if you will have it determined finally by an improper judgment, without debate, without examining the matter *pro* and *con*: this argueth a bad cause and a guilty conscience; when you dare not try the matter between God and your own souls; and dare not to see how it will go there, when there is none to audit the account but He and you.

I would fain have you consider the matter in this light day by day in such cases; that, when you go to take your rest at night, you may lie down and sleep in peace; not because you do not consider the state of your case, whether you have done

your duty or not; but because you have; and so can appeal to God about it, that you have done according to the obligations of the Christian law, lying upon you in reference to yourself and in reference to yours.

Objection II. Some may say, "It is true they begin to apprehend and admit a conviction, that it is very reasonable and fit, there should be religion in families, even as such; but they know not how to master the great difficulty of *beginning*." It hath been hitherto an unwonted thing with them; and if the truth of the matter should be confessed, it would be plainly this, that they are ashamed to be taken notice of by their relatives and dependants, as those who have admitted a conviction that they have been hitherto in the wrong. They think it will be an owning of a sort of guilt in their omission hitherto, when they shall set this on foot as a new course.

Answer. But methinks the providence of God hath mighty opportunely provided you an answer against this objection, if it hath any place in the minds of any; by ordering the matter so, that the duty should be recommended so unanimously at the same time by so great a body of the ministry, that in many considerable congregations in this city this subject of family-religion hath newly been insisted on at once. Is it a shame to hearken to the voice of instructors, so instructed (as we may believe) of God, as unitedly to give a kind of *celeusma*, to *cry*, "Come let us all at once see what can be done to beat down the growing irreligion and profaneness of the age, and to revive languishing religion and to cause it to spring up afresh in families!"

Oh what a comely, lovely example was London to the rest of the Christian world, when religion and the order of families was more generally kept up in it! Such a lustre in this respect did hardly shine upon any spot on earth, as did upon this city. And when there is so common a cry only to revive a former practice, should it be a shame to hearken to it?

We are indeed to take all heed imaginable, that this may not degenerate into a dead or sleepy formality. It is no necessary consequence, that it should do so. It is not the design, either of the Scripture precept, or of them that enforce such precepts upon you, that you should rest in the external form of this piece or part of religion: but that we should all labour to get the form filled up with life and spirit more and more. And by how much the more it shall be so; as London hath been an eminent instance of religion in former times and ages, especially since the reformation, so it will be much more so. As it is grown more in other respects, so may it through the blessing of God grow in this respect also!

We are expecting the time, when the Spirit of the Lord is to be poured forth more copiously, more generally, and in a greater measure, than hitherto : and what an honour will it be, that shall be put upon London, if that shall be made a luminary to so great a part of the world besides, as such a city can fall under the notice and observation of? Instead of shame, here will be glory. Do you glory, (instead of being ashamed) to bear your part in so noble a design, to revive languishing religion in our land, and in London, and in our age. If you think it fit, that Christian religion should not dwindle and go out in a snuff; oh, contribute your utmost in your several stations, that it may be more and more a spreading and vivid thing, such as may spread and recommend itself.

SERMON VI.*

WE now proceed to the *Use*, which may be proper to be made of all the foregoing discourses. And,

I. That which hath been said may be useful for our instruction in sundry inferences, which it will be very obvious to deduce from it.

1. That if there ought to be such a thing as family-religion; then certainly there ought to be such a thing as personal. For as families do suppose persons, and are made up of them; so family-religion must suppose personal religion. For the reason formerly mentioned, I did select out of this text for my main subject the business of family-religion, and do not design a distinct discourse concerning personal; that being the business of all our preaching and hearing all the year about. But yet, as I told you, I shall not pass over upon this subject the business of solitary or personal religion. But I reckon it very fitly comes in by way of inference and deduction from what hath been said to the former: for there cannot be a greater absurdity or solecism in all the world, than that a man should pretend to set up religion in his family, and yet know nothing what belongs to any exercises of religion alone and apart by himself.

* Preached January 21, 1693.

I know many pretend, (but I hope from what you have heard it is but a pretence,) that the obligation unto family-religion is obscure and hard to be made out. But in the mean time, as to personal religion, nothing can be more express. How distinct is the command of our great and blessed Lord, in Mat. 6. 6. "Enter into thy closet, and shut thy door, and pray to him in secret that seeth in secret, and he will reward thee openly." Because then we have shewn, that religion is not to be shut up in a closet, is it therefore to be shut out thence, against so express a precept as this? I intend no more than only to touch upon this subject; and pursuantly unto my design in taking notice of it, it will suffice to say briefly these four things concerning it.

(1.) That there is more constant and easy opportunity for the exercise of personal and solitary religion, than there can be for any other. And a mighty privilege that is, which a good soul would be loath to forfeit or to make nothing of: "I can be with God alone at any time; I can retire myself, when I will, to the more stated exercises of personal religion. Whenever my heart is in a disposition, I can presently ejaculate a thought, a desire, and holy aspiring Godward. It is possible that men may hinder the meeting of others together for the exercises of religion; but who can come between God and me? With him I can converse in any den, in any desert, in any dungeon; and none can prevent me."

(2.) There is more liberty and freedom of spirit in the secret exercises of religion. Then I can pour out my soul and vent myself unto God freely, when I am with him in a corner. This is one of the great privileges of friendship. It is the mutual sense of those that are entirely friends to one another, "We are theatre enough to one another," as the noted moralist speaks, *Alter alteri satis amplum theatrum sumus.* I and my friend; there needs no witness, no spectator: it is enough for us, that we can be entirely and inwardly conversant with one another.

(3.) There is hereupon so much more of delight in it, the highest complacency. You know what the delights are of friendly commerce with one of a suitable spirit. But as there is no friendship like the divine, so there are no delights like those of divine friendship. When I retire myself with him on purpose, "My meditation of him shall be sweet," saith the Psalmist. psal. 104. 34. He forecasts thus with himself. "How precious are thy thoughts to me, O God! I can be with God, as soon as I can think a thought; and how delightful is it, when he is pleased to mingle thoughts with me, to inject thoughts!" That is the way of spirits conversing with one another; and

most of all of the paternal Spirit, the Father of spirits, that knoweth how most immediately and inwardly to influence his own off-spring.

(4.) There is the fullest expression of sincerity in secret and closet-religion. It is in opposition to the practice of hypocrites, that our Saviour gives that injunction which I mentioned in Mat. 6. 5. 6. "When ye pray, be not as the hypocrites, they would fain appear to men to pray; they love to pray in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men." All their religion is street-religion, synagogue-religion; they know no other. "But do thou enter into thy closet, and shut the door," &c. There is nothing of design in this, but to meet with God, to pay him the homage I owe to him, and to seek from him the vital communications which I need. Here is nothing of pomp, nothing of ostentation. When our Saviour saith, hypocrites do so and so; you may easily by other places in the gospel know whom he means by that character, namely, the scribes and pharisees, mentioned in the foregoing chapter and elsewhere. They are often mentioned in conjunction with that other title, in Mat. 23. "Woe unto you scribes and pharisees, hypocrites." Of all religions in the world, I would never make a pharisee the measure of my religion; to have but a pharisaical religion, a religion with others or in the sight of others, but none to myself. How many please themselves, if they think they have a more excellent gift in this kind, to make ostentation of it to others; but towards God alone they are dumb and silent! They seem to be all religion with others; but alone they are nothing in it, their hearts are all earth and stone.

2. If there ought to be family-religion set up and kept up by governors of families; then—they in families, who are under government, are obliged to comply thereunto.*—Any duty, that is incumbent upon one relative as such, doth manifestly imply the duty of the correlative or of the correlate. If governors of families must set up and keep up religion in their families; then they that are under government must comply. The same authority, that binds the one, binds the other too. So that they, who refuse to comply, are not only rebels against the governors of the family; but rebels against the Lord of heaven and earth, with whose authority such governors are invested: for there is no power but from him.

And though it be true indeed, that a human governor can see no farther than to an external conformity; he from whom the obligation principally comes, seeth farther, seeth into the

* See Page 389.

heart and soul with the strictest and most prying inspection. And therefore with reference to him, such as are under government in families are obliged to concur in heart and spirit, and not to afford an external and bodily presence only. For your business lies with the God of the spirits of all flesh; who takes notice, whether you come with an inclined heart or a disinclined, with aversion or with desire; or whether you attend upon such duties with complacency or without delight. There is no deceiving of him. The same law, that obliges you to pray, obliges you to "pray in the Holy Ghost;" and implieth, that if you desire his communications and assisting influences, as "a Spirit of grace and supplication," they will ordinarily be afforded; and that you will not be destitute of those assistances but by slighting them, by despising and resisting and vexing that Spirit, who is ready to assist you, and to engage your hearts and to do them good by such a duty.

And let me tell you, that as it is a eulogy, a character of praise and commendation, in any one to be good in a bad family; so it must proportionably be a horrid brand upon any one to be bad in a good family. It was thought fit to be put upon record concerning Abijah the son of Jeroboam, (1 Kings 14. 13.) that "there was some good thing found in him towards the Lord his God, even in the house of Jeroboam;" good desires, good inclinations, even in so wicked a family as Jeroboam's was. It is proportionably a horrid mark upon that person, who continueth ungodly in a godly family: that is, a prayerless wretch in a praying family; whose heart at least never prayeth, hath no desires after God; no contrition, no sense in the confession of sin; no love, no gratitude in the acknowledgment of mercy. For one to continue ungodly in a godly family, or to go out ungodly from a godly family, what a horrid thing will this be! How much of terror and amazement will it carry in it at least, when the case comes to open itself to view, and to be looked upon and considered in its proper and native aspect! And even as it now is; to think with one's self, "That such or such children or fellow-servants in a family, where I may have lived a considerable time, may have had their hearts melted in hearing the word read and opened and applied, but mine was always hard: they have had their souls humbled in the acknowledgment of sin, but mine was unhumbled: they have had desires enlarged in seeking for mercy, but I had no desire after spiritual good." To live so in a good family, and to go out such from a good family; oh, the horror of this case, and the reflection it will cause in the close of time! or, if not so, in an eternity of misery, that will never end!

3. We may farther collect hence, that if family-governors

are to resolve, for their families as well as themselves, upon serving the Lord; then—they have a power and a trust over their families, and about their families, in reference hereto.—Otherwise Joshua had said he knew not what, or why, when he said, "I and my house will serve the Lord." But this I have evinced already by several considerations; as was necessary in reference to a discourse of this nature. It is plain such a power God doth invest every governor of a family with.

4. If there be such a power lodged in family-governors; then—this power ought to have its exercise. There is no power in nature, that is frustraneous, and never to be reduced into act. Such an incongruity as that is never to be found in the whole volume of nature. And it is as little to be found in matters that are of a moral and spiritual consideration. If there be then such a power, it ought to be reduced into act. That is, masters of families, by the use and exercise of this power, must oblige those that live under their government to comport becomingly with the duties and exercises of religion in their families. There ought to be a paternal, a despotical use of this power in reference to this case.

If you ask, Wherein? we must speak with distinction, because the subordinate relatives in a family are not all of one order, but there is great diversity among them.

If where there is a godly praying husband, there is an ungodly wife, who cannot endure to comport with such exercises of religion in the family; here is indeed, in reference to what is past, matter of deep shame and humiliation, that no wiser and better a choice was made. Persons in their choice ought mutually to have reference to this as the first and main thing, to match minds and spirits, rather than fancies and fortunes. And it should be matter of deep humiliation, if it have not been so. But as to what is future, there can be no more done in this case, than to exhort with authority, and so to reprove as may be most suitable to the end, and most likely to attain it.

If it be the case as to the husband in reference to the wife, that he discovers an aversion to every thing of religion, and especially to any family-exercises of it; here is no authority to be used; (the woman hath none over the man;) but in that relation there must be all the prudent and gentle persuasions that can be, and a resolution to engage as many of the family as she can to bear a part with her in the exercises of family-religion; as you heard of Esther and her maids. For she is to obey but "in the Lord;" and not so to obey, as to abandon religion upon his account, and to throw it out of the family.

And she is kind to him herein, and puts the greatest obligation upon him, (which he may come to understand in time,) in that she labours to keep off a curse from coming upon the family: as Abigail did once keep off from Nabal a vengeance that was just coming upon him.

But as to children; where there are godly parents that have ungodly children, discovering early a disinclination to religion; (as indeed for the most part it is too early discoverable;) where this is discoverable, there ought to be so much the more serious, earnest endeavour used to cultivate this wilderness of nature, and to correct it betimes. There ought to be early insinuations and endeavours to instill principles of religion, to be instrumental towards the possessing of souls with a reverence of that Majesty, whom they themselves reverence. As no doubt it was from what Jacob had long observed concerning his father Isaac, that, swearing by God, he swore by him under the name of "the fear of his father Isaac;" (Gen. 31. 53.) him, whom he had long observed his father to have a great reverence for.

But when any are grown up with this aversion, (which it may be through great negligence was not animadverted upon betimes, as it should have been,) and do now discover open enmity against the religion of their father and of their family; wise and holy parents have ways yet to make use of their paternal authority in that case, at least in the disposal of what is theirs. They may let it be understood and known, that by how much the less they shew themselves lovers of God, they the parents shall shew themselves so much the less lovers of them, and the more sparingly provide for them. And they ought not only to say so, but to do so. There is not a greater fault to be animadverted upon among persons professing religion, who are governors of families, than that they let a fond and foolish affection to their children prevail against that dutiful and loyal love which they owe to God; that is, that without distinction they labour to put all that they can into the hands of an ungodly son; which is indeed to arm him against God's interest in the world, and against religion. They should take care, that such shall live: but that they shall have all the advantages that they can give them, wherewith to maintain and keep up a war against heaven; this is what good parents can never give an account for, that when they are only intrusted as stewards of the manifold grace of God, they should dispose of it so. These are the gifts of his grace, taken in a larger sense, of his bounty and goodness. And if they shall employ them, in order so much the more effectually to

keep up and maintain a war against the universal Ruler of the world; this is a most undutiful and disloyal affection.

As for servants; they are no such inseparable parts of a family, but that, if they be found finally inflexible, and discover an enmity against God and religion that cannot be overcome and got out of their hearts, they may be got out of the house. And they *must* be so. As the Psalmist speaks concerning telling a lye, (psalm 101.) when he had expressed in the beginning of the psalm his resolution concerning family-order, that "he would walk" or converse "in a perfect way and with an upright heart in his house," perform and do the duties of a family-governor with integrity and uprightness; (that must be meant by *walking* there;) so in what follows he tells you, what the characters should be of one that should stay or should not stay in his house. He speaks to this purpose, both negatively and positively. Negatively; The work of them that turn aside, should not cleave to him, ver. 3. That is, of them that decline and are opposite to religion; so it must principally be understood. "A froward heart shall depart from me; I will not know a wicked person," ver. 4. He had spoken before of the rule he would observe in reference to his house and family; and to this, those following expressions must be understood to have a direct reference. And for the expression of *froward*, and that other of *turning aside;* they are used in divers places of Scripture to signify disinclination to religion, an averse, disaffected heart towards God. As in psalm 53. 2, 3. one of these words is there used: When "God looked down from heaven, to see if any did understand and seek God;" (it is said,) "every one of them *is gone back*; they are in an averse, disaffected posture, all hanging off from God and disaffected to him." So one of these words is used in Psalm 58. 3. "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they *go astray*, as soon as they be born." This reference the expressions must be understood to have here, to signify disaffection to religion. Now such a one, saith he, "shall depart from me, and I will not know him." And afterwards, ver. 7. "He that worketh deceit, shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies, shall not tarry in my sight;" one, in whom this conjunction is actually found, (which is always to be expected,) disaffection to God and falsehood to one's self. A thing, that a heathen took notice of long ago; *Qui Deum non timent, fallent homines: they that fear not God, have no truth towards men.*

But the Psalmist tells us, who shall stay in his house, ver. 6. "Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may

dwell with me; And he that walketh in a perfect way, or uprightly, he shall serve me." "I will have mine eyes every where; and if there be an honest, upright-hearted person to be found, I will choose such a one for my servant."

This ought to be a measure to all of us. A godly, faithful servant is, I am afraid, a too little valued thing with many among us: they are more indifferent, how their servants stand affected towards religion; whether they have any love of God or godliness, yea or no. But if such can be found, saith the Psalmist, they shall serve me, live with me: I will labour to furnish my house, as far as in me is, with such as will labour to comply and fall in with me in the great business of religion. You have heard concerning this same Psalmist David, (2 Sam. 6. 20.) how, after that great solemnity was over of placing the ark, "he returned to bless his household." It is obvious enough to collect, that this was a stated practice with him, from which that great solemnity should not divert him, when the time and season was come of going to perform the ordinary exercises of religion in his house; and unto that therefore in its proper time he applieth himself.

It will therefore be the care of good family-masters, to have such for members of their families, as may contribute to the drawing down of a blessing upon their house; that they may not counteract themselves: And, as the daily exercise of religion is the blessing of a family, that they may not, by connivance and indulgence to wickedness and disaffection to religion, undo their work and pull down a curse, more effectually than they can hope in a half and divided way to gain or draw down a blessing.

These several ways there ought to be an exercise of the power, that God hath invested each master of a family with. And it ought to be considered, that where-ever there is a power, there is a trust. There can be no power but from God; and where he lodgeth this power, he doth also commit a trust into such hands: And the weight of this ought to lie, and will lie upon every one that is conscientious. And therefore,

II. I shall shut up all the discourse upon this subject with a few words of exhortation.

1. Wheresoever family-religion hath been set on foot, let it be continued, and labour to improve it; that is, to be more and more serious and lively and spiritual; both they that are to manage the duty, and they that are to concur and join. Let there be an endeavour to grow more quick and lively herein. When I spoke about the circumstances of such exercises, I said nothing how much time was to be spent in them. Indeed there is no particular rule to be set for that; as I have told you the

matter stands upon other accounts. In such cases prudence is to be exercised in matters of religion, as well as in other matters. "A good man will order his affairs with discretion," as hath been said again and again. Every man is to take his rule and measure for that from discretion; but by no means from indiscretion. It ought to be considered with prudence and judiciousness, what is most likely to serve the end of religion, in such exercises of it as we have been speaking of. I reckon, that one quarter of an hour spent with spirit and life, is a great deal better than hours together spent in nauseous flatting repetitions; (which was the pharisaical way,) in such a tedious and fulsome way, as tends to make religion a burden and grievance. I think that is applicable to the purposes of religion, which hath been applied to meaner, much meaner purposes; that it is good to come from a meal with an appetite; that it is good to come so too from an exercise of religion, with those pleasant lively relishes left upon one's spirit as may make him wish for the return of such a season: "When will the time for prayer and solemn attendances upon God come again?" But this, beyond all things, should be endeavoured, that there may be an improvement in life and vigour and spirituality in the performance of these things, both in them that manage them, and in those that are to concur and join; where such a thing as family-religion is set up and hath been kept up.

2. I must desire you to suffer the exhortation too, where family-religion hath not hitherto been begun. Oh, make haste and begin it, keep it off no longer. Defer no longer to God so indisputable a right; or to make use of so great an advantage for yourselves, and for yours that you are concerned for. I hinted to you in what was said to an objection, that it may be a great difficulty with some how to begin. They are ashamed to be taken notice of, as having received a conviction of this matter, and so to own a fault by applying to a contrary practice. But we all profess ourselves christians: and as we are men, we are under the government of the Supreme Ruler, and must be accountable to him. It becomes us on both accounts, to learn to be ashamed of our sin, and not to be ashamed of our duty. And if what hath been said shall obtain to be considered and laid to heart; I cannot but hope, that they who are ashamed to begin, will rather be ashamed not to begin, to defer and neglect so great and important and blessed a work as this is.

O think, how shame will be estimated one day in "the general assembly;" when all the world, the whole creation of intelligent creatures, angels and men, shall be convened be-

fore the judgment-seat. Think how shame and reputation will be estimated in the great day. You are told that the resurrection of ungodly ones will be a resurrection and awakening to shame and everlasting reproach. (Dan. 12. 2.) Many of them, that sleep in the dust of the earth, shall awake; some to shame and everlasting reproach. Oh! for a man to be hurried away from the bright, glorious presence of the blessed God, under the notion of one that would not call upon him; severed from all "the spirits of just men made perfect;" and from that innumerable company of glorious and blessed angels, to be made an associate and companion of devils to all eternity, for this very reason! Why is he driven into darkness, and cast out into those regions, where there is weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth? Why, he would never call upon God: he had a family, but there was no religion in it; he never cared to keep up God's interest in his earthly station. This is therefore his portion and punishment. Think, whether this will not be a greater shame, than to begin a holy religious course, that hath been neglected hitherto.

I shall briefly shut up all with the following considerations, that may through God's blessing help to enforce all upon us.

(1.) Consider, How come you to have a family, and your family to have a place and habitation in this world? Do you not know, that the Lord is the Ruler of all this world, and that he sets the solitary in families, and appoints to all the bounds of their habitation? And for what? That they might seek the Lord; (as is signified, Act. 17. 26, 27, 28.) if so be they may feel and find him out, who is not far from any one of us, since in him we all live and move and have our being. Will you defeat the design, for which God made such a world of creatures, and hath disposed them into societies and convenient stations here upon this earth? Was this done merely to gratify and please these creatures? That is to suppose a creature designed by God to be its own end, and that he had resigned the prerogative of his Deity to the work of his own hands now in rebellion against him.

(2.) Do not you know, that you need a constant preserver in your several dwellings? Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Psalm 127. 1. A city you know is made up of so many houses inhabited; but every such house is kept in vain, if God be not the keeper. And what! Is *he* not worth the taking notice of, that watcheth over you night after night and day after day?

(3.) How can you expect to live comfortably in your dwel-

lings without God? What good will your enjoyments do you? Can a blessing for a soul spring out of the earth, a good suitable to an immortal mind? It is an amazing thing, as Job represents it, (chap. 21. 7,) &c. that men should outwardly flourish in their external circumstances, "live, become old, and mighty in power, have their seed established in their sight, and their offspring before their eyes, and their houses safe from fear;" they dwell securely in them, they are safe from fear, though not from danger; and yet take no notice, who it is that makes them dwell in that safety; and thereupon say unto God, notwithstanding all this, that they live under his wing and upon his bounty, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways," ver. 14. "Our houses shall be as much strangers to religion, as they are to fear; they are free from fear, and they shall be as free from piety too." This they are pleased with as their greatest privilege, to be without God. And yet, as it follows ver. 16. "Their good is not in their own hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me." Let it be far from me! I would not have my soul bound up with such a one's soul! O my soul, enter not into the secret of those horrid creatures, those monsters of ingratitude, undutifulness and disaffection towards a kind, gracious and benign Lord! They have not their good in their own hand, but it is all in his, to whom they yet say, "Depart from us!" And they may seem to prosper in this course awhile; but see what comes of it at length ver. 17. &c. "How often is the candle of the wicked put out?" their prosperity reversed, their light extinguished? and how often cometh their destruction upon them? ver. 19. "God layeth up his iniquity for his children;" (this cometh of it at last;) he rewardeth him, and he shall know it." Many times he takes care, that he shall know it in such ways as are there expressed, ver. 20. "His own eyes shall see his own destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty. For what pleasure hath he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst?" He hath children springing up, it may be, and furnished by his foolish and fond care and concern with great things in this world; such a son is married into such a family, and such a daughter into another, where they are richly and opulently provided for. But his children come to destruction in his very sight. It is often so; he seeth all wasting and melting away, even as a heap of snow before the sun. This is often the heritage of wicked men from the Lord in this world; and if it be not so in this world, worse and more dismal things ensue afterwards. In the mean time, what comfort can there be, with all the enjoyments and affluence that a man can have in

his house, be it ever so pleasing a habitation, while God is a stranger, dwells not there; is not worshipped, and so dwells not there?

(4.) Consider, how amiable a thing a religious family is, where the fear of God governeth and flourisheth. Do but read to that purpose the 128th psalm, which might fruitfully be run over.

(5.) Do not you desire, that the world should mend? that you may see better times, and to see your city flourish? If trade languish, every one is sensible: methinks we should not be insensible, if religion languish. But how shall it live, if not in families? There is the great failure. And any place, that hath been long the seat of religion, when it comes to decay in that respect, will decay in other respects too. "Be instructed, O Jerusalem, lest my soul depart from thee: and I leave thee desolate without inhabitant." Jer. 6. 8. If that, which is the very soul of any people's good estate, even of the political body; if that retire, all moulders: as, if the soul of a man retires, is gone and withdrawn, the body crumbles and turns to dust. How desirable a thing is it to a native of London, to see London in a prosperous, flourishing condition! But never expect to see it so, if religion shall be in a languishing decaying condition gradually from day to day. That will be a dreadful foretoken.

(6.) Consider, that all family-masters are stewards, and all stewards must be accountable. O consider within how little a time we are every one of us to be called to an account: "What did you do in your station, as governor or governed in such a family?" Prepare, that you may be capable of rendering a good account, an account comfortable to yourselves.

(7.) Consider, that there cannot be a better omen of a good state of things coming, than if we could see that take effect, which hath been designed and endeavoured by so many servants of God at this time, upon the subject of family-religion. There could not be a more promising token to us. God hath touched the minds of those who are associated in the work of the gospel among us, all at once, by a kind of *celcusma* to cry up family-religion. If this should have its good effect, (and why should we not hope it will?) we cannot have a better token for good. The cry of wickedness is loud. If the cry of prayer, when it shall come to be so united a cry, shall prevail and be louder; this will draw down blessings. The cry of wickedness is calling for wrath and vengeance, for the vials to be poured out upon us: but if so many houses, as there are in London, wherein religion is professed, should really become so many oratories, houses of prayer; it is to be hoped there

will be so many louder cries ascending up to heaven for mercy. If there had been fifty, forty, thirty, twenty, nay ten righteous persons in Sodom; that would have prevailed for mercy upon that city. If so many as profess religion in London, would but practise it, and this part of it in particular, to set prayer on work with importunity and fervour in their several families; in this respect *vox populi* will be *vox Dei:* the voice of a praying people will be as the voice of God blessing us from above; and telling us that you have prevailed, the course of wrath is stopped, the decree reversed, prayer is heard, and that you shall see London the city of your solemnities a quiet habitation. This is said by way of answer to the people, who are brought in at the beginning of Isa. 33. 2. praying, "O Lord, be gracious unto us, let thine arm be awakened for us every morning." Here was daily prayer ascending and going up. It follows in ver. 20. "Look upon Zion the city of our solemnities, thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down, not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken." And so many prayers ascending out of so many several families in London, will be harbingers to those, from whom those prayers proceeded, and in whose souls they were formed and inwrought. Such praying souls shall ascend at length and follow their prayers. And if we who are now here assembled have not this hope, what are we here for? Why do we worship? if this be not our hope, that our souls shall follow our adoration? We know we are to be here but a little while. We send up prayers, desires and praises here in our assembly, in the hope and expectation, that before long, we shall follow the prayers and praises which ascend out of our assembly. Worship God with the same hope and expectation in your families, that you yourselves shall before long follow your prayers and praises ascending from thence also.

THE

VANITY

OF A FORMAL

PROFESSION OF RELIGION

Considered

IN

EIGHT SERMONS.

On Titus 1. 16.

SERMON I*.

Titus 1. 16.

They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

SINCE it is too obvious, that many persons are apt to satisfy themselves with the mere profession of Christianity; and to reckon that while they explicitly own the true religion they are sound christians and good protestants, without considering whether that religion carries due and suitable impressions on their hearts or not; I have therefore thought it might not be unuseful, to discourse a little from this scripture, and shew the vanity and insignificance of an empty profession, a profession which refutes and contradicts itself. To make way for what I intend from this passage of Scripture, there are a few things that it will be necessary for me to recommend to your notice.

First. That this phrase, the knowing of God, is a usual expression to signify religion in general; inasmuch as it is the primary, the most deep and fundamental thing in all religion. It is, as I remember the moralist stiles it, "The foundation of foundations." Hence, from so noted and principal a part, the denomination is put upon the whole. To know God therefore, is to own him, to acknowledge him as our God; and

* This Sermon is without a date; but, it is very probable, it was preached on January 16, 1680.

thereupon to carry ourselves suitably towards him. In the first commandment, which establishes the relation betwixt God and us, it is intimated, that if we will have him to be our God, we must have no other gods before him. Exod. 20. 3. And again, one of the prophets expresses it by knowing no other *god* but *Him*.. "I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt; and thou shalt know no other god but me, for there is no Saviour besides me." Hos. 13. 4. The import then of the expression, is to own him as *God*, in relation to ourselves; and consequently to love and fear him, to hope and delight in him, and the like. All which, result from the relation betwixt him and us: according to that well known observation and rule among the Hebrews; that "words of knowledge import life and sense, as consequent; as words of life and sense suppose knowledge antecedent."

Secondly. This phrase imports not only natural religion, but also that which is revealed. Knowing God therefore is not to be taken so abstractedly, as though it meant no more than only to entertain the notion of the Deity, and the practice of those duties that we are led to by the light of nature; but more generally whatever duty he is pleased to enjoin also by revelation. We then know and acknowledge him as *God*, with respect to his sovereignty and dominion, when we are universally observant of his will; how or by what means soever it is made known to us: whether it be by natural light, or express superadded revelation. And therefore we find this expression made use of to signify religion among the Jews, while they were a peculiar people unto God. It is said, Hezekiah, a good king, "spoke comfortably to the Levites," *to their hearts*, according to the hebrew, "who taught the good knowledge of the Lord." 2 Chron 30. 22. That is, instructed the people in religion, according to the revelation of the mind and will of God, which was then afforded them.

Thirdly. We find this phrase expressly used to signify the Christian religion in particular. And thus the same apostle uses it in another place. "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God, I speak this to your shame." 1 Cor. 15. 34. As if he had said, "You do not know God, you do not demean and behave yourselves like those, who understand the principles of your own religion." And again, says the apostle, "After you have known God, why turn ye back to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" Gal. 4. 9. That is, Why do you follow the gnostics in mixing judaical and pagan rites with the religion of Christ?

Fourthly. We are therefore further to collect, that the apos-

tle does here, in this place, particularly intend the Christian religion. "They profess that they know God;" that is, they profess to be christians. For it is very evident he writes of such, as professed the only true religion. The teachers who seduced and corrupted them it is evident, were professed christians, though very corrupt and unsound ones: for they endeavoured to deprave others; not indeed as avowed adversaries to the Christian name, but as deceivers and gainsayers. It is true, the apostle said, they ought to be convinced; by which he implies that there were some common agreed principles among them, which might be the ground of such conviction. He calls them deceivers, who by cunning insinuations laboured to pervert the Christian doctrine, and to render it favourable to licentious and immoral practices. And therefore those, whom they had perverted, must be of the same stamp: not wholly of the Jewish religion, for that their teachers were not; but judaizing christians. They who lived so remote from Judea, cannot be thought to have entertained the principles of the Jewish religion entirely; nor so generally and in such numbers, as is here implied, for "many whole houses were subverted." Tit. 1. 11. Much less can we suppose the whole body of the people to be naturally Jews; for the apostle does manifestly describe them by the common national taint of that island, that is, as "liars, evil beasts, slow bellies," (Tit. 1. 12.) according to the character given of them by one of their own poets.* Thus are the people described, whom the apostle speaks of, namely, the natives of Crete, who were converted from paganism to the profession of the Christian religion, with which they mingled many of the Judaical sentiments. This therefore being premised, our way is plain and clear to the things I intend to insist upon; which are especially these two—That men may profess the true religion, and yet lead very ill lives: and—That they who do so, by just interpretation, may be said to deny the religion they profess.—I propose to speak to these two observations jointly in this order.

I. I shall shew what sort of profession that must be, which can be meant in such a case.

II. What the persons who make it may be notwithstanding, in the temper of their spirits, and the course of their practice.

III. I shall shew whence it is, that men should make profession of a religion, to which the temper of their spirits, and the course of their walking are so repugnant. And

* Epimenides.

IV. The vanity of such a profession, and how little it signifies to entitle persons to the reputation, or proper rewards of such a religion.

I. I shall shew what sort of profession that must be, which can be meant in this case, or was made by such persons as the apostle speaks of.

1. It must be understood to be, in the main, but a nominal profession. These professors indeed own the Christian name, call themselves by it; and not only do so, but also claim the privilege of being called christians by others: like those who said they were Jews, when they were not, but were of the synagogue of Satan. Rev. 2. 9. And St. Paul in the second chapter of his epistle to the Romans, speaking of these professors, uses the very same style, alluding to those who called themselves Jews, or were commonly so called by others; "Thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God," &c. but says he, in the close of that chapter, "He is not a Jew that is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew, that is one inwardly—whose praise is not of men but of God." Rom. 2. 17. 29.

2. This profession could be only formal; that is, wholly made up of the external form of that religion to which they pretended. So in like manner, many now profess the Christian religion and make a shew or appearance of being religious by frequenting Christian assemblies; by owning themselves to be members of the catholic, or some protestant church: and by wearing the badge and cognizance of such and such a party. The bare having a name, is all we can suppose to be in such a profession as this. And therefore to these professors may be applied what our Lord says to the church in Sardis; "Thou hast a name that thou art alive, when thou art dead." Rev. 3. 1. And so it is, in like manner, with all others; who content themselves with making a shew of religion, and performing such external rites, as are the distinguishing badge of the several parties of the Christian world.

II. I am now to shew you what such persons may be, notwithstanding their profession, both in temper and practice; which shall be done briefly by opening the terms of the text. They may be for all that, abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate; that is, in one word, inclined to all evil, and averse to all good. To these two things do these several expressions amount.

1. They are said to be βδελυκτοι, *abominable*, or shamefully addicted to all manner of evil. The word, in the original, denotes the heinousness of those practices, in which they allow

themselves; and is derived from a word that signifies to send forth an offensive smell. For all sentiments of right and good, are not so totally lost and obliterated among mankind, but that there are some things which even pagans would detest.

2. They are said to be also απειθεις, *disobedient*, which expression imports perseverance and obstinacy in an evil course. They will by no means, by no importunity, no arguments whatever be dissuaded from practices so unjustifiable, and detestable in their own nature. They are resolved to run on whatever it costs them; to continue in sin, and in the profession of religion at the same time, which is the greatest absurdity imaginable.

3. They are said, lastly, to be προς παν εργον αγαθον αδοκιμοι, *reprobate to every good work;* which signifies a disinclination to every thing that is good, to every thing that is worthy of praise. The word may be taken as it is observed, either actively or passively, and so may signify not only to be disapproved by others, but to disapprove themselves; in which latter sense we must, at present, principally understand the phrase. They disapprove all that which claims their approbation and esteem; and are disaffected to all that good, which the religion they profess would oblige them to the practice of. The expression therefore does not so much signify their omission of what is good, as their disinclination to it; but it further denotes that if they do any thing at all in religion, it is what they neither delight in, nor can endure. "Every good work" is an expression of such latitude, that it may comprehend all the works of piety, mercy, and common justice. And so it is fit we should understand it in this place. Whatever they do of this kind, their hearts are averse to it, and they bear a disaffected mind to it all. And such as are here described, persons may be found to be, notwithstanding their profession.

III. We are next to consider, whence it is, or what inducements men have to make profession of a religion, which they are resolved to contradict in the course of their lives and conversations. And many things may be considered as inducements or reasons in this case, which concur partly in all those who are mere professors; though some are of greater force than others to particular persons, whom we shall distinguish from the generality of men of this character.

1. One reason why such men join a profession of religion to a vicious life, is their unapprehensiveness, and irreverence of an invisible Lord and Judge; whom because they do not see, they stand in no awe of. Therefore it is that they are not ashamed of that incongruous and inconsistent behaviour towards him, of which they would be ashamed in their deportment towards

men. The following expression of the apostle gives us a great deal of light to this purpose, "If a man love not his brother whom he hath seen; how can he love God, whom he hath not seen?" 1 John 4. 20. Wherein is implied a greater difficulty of loving God, than a Christian brother; on this account, because God is not seen. Man continually falls under our sight and view, we converse with him daily in a way that is obvious to our natural sight, while God is invisible. And as it is in the point of love, so is it in all other natural affections; for as men with greater difficulty admit the impressions of divine love into their hearts, than those of a visible object, so they do of divine fear; and for this reason, I say, because God is not seen. Men would be ashamed continually to profess to one another, what they contradict in practice. Who would not be ashamed to declare himself perpetually such a one's friend; and yet, in the mean time, take all opportunities to do him all the mischief he can? But as to their carriage to an unseen God, men are not ashamed of such an incongruity as this.

2. This inconsistent conduct proceeds from the power and malignity of sinful inclinations; more especially in things that relate to, and terminate on God. Sin has filled the world with enmity, which, it is true, works in men one against another: but more directly, and with greater virulence, against the blessed God himself; insomuch that they care not what dishonours they throw on his sacred name, nor what affronts they offer to his high authority and righteous laws. And though it must be acknowledged, the working of this enmity is great among men towards one another; yet, it is manifest, it is in general much greater towards the Almighty: for were it as common a thing to stab a man, as it is to wound the name of God and to affront his government, the world had been at an end long before this.

3. It is natural for men to have somewhat of religion, while a disaffection still remains against that which is true: whence it is that they resist, and overthrow the profession they make, by a most repugnant practice. It is manifest, as to the former, that all must be of some religion or other; and so they come to profess, as external circumstances lead them. It has been noted by heathens, that no society of men can live without religion. Divers have taken notice of it. It is a common passage of Cicero; "There is no nation so barbarous as to be without religion."* It seems as if none such had fallen within the compass of his observation. Maximus Tyrius also tells us, that "For a man to be without any religion at all, were as

* Tuscul Disput. Lib. 1.

monstrous and unnatural, as for an ox to be without horns, or a bird to be without wings."* And so Plutarch in like manner observes, that "Though there be many towns and cities without coin, without government, as it happens sometimes; yet," says he, "I never heard or read in my life, of a city without a temple. And I believe it is as impossible, that there should be a society of men without religion, as to build a city without foundations."†

Hence many persons, both ancient and modern, have thought religion to be the specific difference of man, and not reason; because there are so many apparent specimens of this in beasts, that in some instances it is hard to distinguish by this only between the brutal and human nature: whereas religion is peculiar to man, wherein no other sort of creatures do participate. For it is very plain that man, by his self-reflecting power, discerns himself to be a depending creature; which necessarily prompts him to pay homage to some superior being, on whom he thinks himself dependant. And therefore, if many of the pagans have worshipped for deities, those creatures which they thought most useful to them; it was not that they supposed them to be deities in reality, but because they looked upon them as representing the Deity, in those respects, wherein it was most beneficial to them.

But now, while men are naturally addicted to profess some religion, as it comes in their way, that which they have the best opportunity to know; so at the same time they have, generally, a most rooted disaffection to sincere religion, such as should command their hearts, and govern their lives and practice. This is to be resolved in some measure into the justice and sovereignty of God. Into his justice, in not continuing to give that grace which men resist and contend against: and though it is of infinite mercy that his grace does overcome in some instances, yet that it does not in all, is to be attributed to his sovereign dominion: in which he is not to be prescribed unto, as to his dispensations to his creatures, who have made themselves obnoxious to his displeasure. He is just, where he withholds any benefit; he is sovereignly gracious where he gives that assistance and power, which shall prevail against this enmity in the hearts of men. And when persons must have something of religion, and will have only that of it which is most tolerable, and does not bear hard upon corrupt nature; no wonder then, I say, if they take up with the bare

* Max. Tyr. Dissert. 17. Sec. 5. Edit. Davis. Lond. 1740. quarto.

† Plut adversus Colotem. See this point handled at large by the Author in his Living Temple Part 1 chap. 2.

name, and content themselves with the mere form of godliness. But to profess at such a rate is the most easy thing in the world.

4. This may in some cases proceed, particularly in the Christian world, from an inward conviction of the importance and excellence of religion, arising from the light of Scripture, joined with the inefficacy of it. Very plain it is, that the light by which the truth of the Christian religion is discovered to any one, carries mighty conviction of its excellence along with it. It does so to any one who views the weight and importance of the Christian religion, and considers also the evidences of it which are superadded. A religion that came with triumphant evidence and glory into the world! spoken at first by the Son of God, and confirmed by them who heard him; God bearing them witness, by signs and wonders of the Holy Ghost. Heb. 2. 3, 4. Some do consider these things, and thereupon the light is so convincing, that they cannot withstand it, nor avoid receiving this religion as divine; but then, alas! it is too faint and impotent to govern their hearts and lives. It is powerful enough to convince their judgments and consciences; but too weak to change their minds, and influence their actions. Hence it is that there is in many a profession of the true religion, with a repugnant, inconsistent practice.

5. With some others, a profession of religion may proceed from mere sinister designs. They make a profession of religion, because it suits with their interests and private views; and serves to raise and establish their reputation, and by consequence to increase their gain. They could not do so well without it in such a country, and among such a people; so that gain and godliness with them are commensurate to each other. Therefore, since a profession alone serves their turn, and answers their purpose, what need is there of any more? What need has any man of more than will answer his end? "I will have no more to do with religion, but to serve my secular interest," will such a one say, if he speaks his own sense: "I design not to be saved by religion; but to live creditably in the world, and to suit my designs with those, with whom I live." Again,

6. With others it may proceed from a regard to their ancestors, from whom a religion has been transmitted to them. This is a thing that has descended from father to son; "I must therefore be of the religion of my fathers." This shews the reason why a religion so received, be it ever so good, should be so ineffectual; and have so little command of the hearts and lives of men: for its efficacy, and the grounds for receiv

ing it, do as it were measure one another. The apostle Paul, speaking of the manner in which the Christian religion was received by the Thessalonians, says; They received it not as the word of man, but of God, which effectually worketh in them that believe. 1 Thes. 2. 13. Hence it appears plain, that where the religion of Jesus as coming from God is embraced on the authority of the divine word, and where men have their souls overawed by this apprehension, there it works effectually; but on the contrary where it is received without grounds, there it becomes ineffectual. Many are christians on the same grounds, and for the same reasons, that others are pagans, mahometans, or any thing else. And were they to give a true account of their faith, it would be this; "The religion that my forefathers were of, must be mine also." This is an argument, which, *mutatis mutandis*, serves as well to make the Mahometan religion true, as the Christian. And if it is so professed, without grounds or reasons, it is no wonder if it be without efficacy on men's lives and practice.

7. With others a profession of religion is taken up as a novelty. A veneration for antiquity has a great influence on some; while others are as fond of novelty. This was the case, it is likely, of many of those unsound christians, whom the apostle speaks of in this epistle to Titus. Christianity at this time could be but newly planted in Crete, it could be only in its infancy; and therefore many embraced it as a new thing, and were pleased with it on this account. Thus we may see, men of different tempers are swayed to the same end by contrary inducements. And we may add in the last place,

8. That nothing but custom can make the profession of religion to appear tolerable, where it is attended with a repugnant and contradictory practice. Were there but few instances of this kind, a man would not have the boldness to venture on an open course of wickedness, repugnant to the religion commonly professed where he lives, whilst he continued to make a profession of it himself. But it is very obvious to common experience, that many do emulate one another in that, which is most indecorous and unbecoming, even in that which is contrary to the common reason of all. How many gainful sorts of wickedness have ceased to be shameful now-a-days from their being common! For when the restraint of shame is taken off from the mind, it is a most easy thing then for a man to be wicked. Thus influenced by custom they justify one another in what their own sedate thoughts would condemn, if they would but allow themselves to think. And hence it is that men are able to reconcile two of the most inconsistent

things in the world; a profession of the most pure religion with the most impure conversation.

I should have proceeded to the fourth general head of discourse, but shall conclude with one dreadful and tremendous reflection. What apparent danger are we in, of losing that religion from among us, which is more generally professed at this day! principally because of the resistance and opposition, which is made against it, by the practices of those who profess it. For pray do but consider—What does God send his gospel among a people for? Does he aim at any end in this, or does he not? And can that be a wise, intelligent agent, who aims at no end? Or can we suppose him to act wisely who aims at no proportionable and suitable end? What then can we think the great God designed as his end, in sending the gospel into the world; in planting it in this, or any other nation? There are certainly fruits that he expects to receive; and therefore we find how express the threatenings are, when these fruits are withheld. Nothing less is threatened than the taking of the kingdom of God from them, and the giving it to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. Mat. 21. 43. Oh! the little correspondency of the hearts and spirits of men to the design of the gospel! And what a tremendous and melancholy prospect does this afford us!

I should not be so afraid of comets and blazing stars †, nor of all the malice and subtilty of earth and hell combined together; I should never be afraid of these things, I say, even though the subtilty of our enemies was a thousand times greater than it is, if I could but see such a love of the gospel, joined to the enjoyment of it, as to form the heart, and influence the practice. But when I find it is God's way, and express threatening, that where the truth is not loved, there to give them up to strong delusions even to believe a lie, that they might be damned, who believed not the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness, (2 Thes. 2. 10, 11, 12.) then I confess, I fear, I tremble.

I know not why we should think ourselves exempt from a danger of this kind, when we consider how generally ineffectual the gospel is among us. Alas! why should we expect God to be indulgent towards us, in this respect, above all mankind? What have we the gospel for, if we never intend our spirits should be formed by it? If we have no design it should govern our lives, have not we of this nation reason to

* N. B. The author here alludes to the famous comet which appeared in December 1680; and perhaps at the very time when this Sermon was preached.

fear, inasmuch as we do not conform our practice to our religion, that we shall be suffered to conform our religion to our practice? We know there is a religion, too near at hand, that will allow and square well enough with the most vicious practice imaginable. Live as loosely as you will and confess your sins to a priest, and his absolution solves all. Surely we have reason to fear lest our acting contradictory to the end and design of our religion should even lead us to embrace that sottish one of the church of Rome.

SERMON II*.

IN our last discourse we considered the various reasons and inducements, that lead many persons to make a profession of religion, even while they are contradicting it in their lives and practice. To which one more might have been added; and that is, they have a foolish thought that by the good they profess, they shall some way or other expiate the badness of their conduct. Such a hope as this, as fond as it is, too apparently obtains with a great part of the world. And this I mention, not only as a thing too evident, and considerable in itself, but as it most fitly leads to what I intend in this discourse: which is,

IV. To shew the vanity of such a profession, and by consequence the fondness and folly of such a hope as is here spoken of. And in treating on this subject I shall shew, that such a profession in persons of so immoral a character, signifies nothing either to procure them the reputation, or the rewards of the religion that they profess, or unto which they pretend; I would be understood to say, that it is of no avail to entitle them to the reputation of it amongst men, nor to any reward of it from God. These two things we shall distinctly consider.

* Preached January 23, 1680.

1. Such a blasted, self-confuted profession as this, of which we are speaking, is of no significancy for securing the reputation of being religious amongst men. If it were indeed so far available as to secure them such a reputation, or to procure them that esteem from men, which is due to those who are in reality, what they profess themselves to be, that would be but a poor thing, and very little to their service. It is a small thing, says the apostle St. Paul, to be judged by man's judgment, 1 Cor. 4. 3. All must finally stand or fall, by the judgment of a superior Judge, whose judgment will controul and reverse all false judgments passed before. Every man must then give an account of himself to God. He is not a jew who is one outwardly, but he is a jew that is one inwardly, whose praise is not of men, but of God, Rom. 2. 28, 29. If one could never so effectually recommend one's self to man, it is "not he who commendeth himself, that is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth." 2 Cor. 10. 18. And therefore I should not think this much worth insisting on, but only with design to lay the ground of an argument from the less to the greater: that if such a profession of religion cannot do that which is less, to wit, entitle one to the reputation of it amongst men; much less can it do that which is greater, that is, procure the rewards, which God has promised to the constant and sincere.

We must understand here, that by such evil practices, as can be supposed to overthrow a profession, and annul the significance of it, cannot be meant such things as are reasonable to be imputed to the infirmities which are incident to the best, and consistent with the most perfect human character: but it must be understood of open hostilities against Christ and his religion; for doubtless the words abominable, and disobedient or unpersuadable, as the word ἀπιθεις. signifies, amount to so much. By the former is to be understood, the heinousness, and grossness of their wickedness; and by the latter, their obstinacy in an evil course. It is true, though the last expression the apostle makes use of in describing the persons whom he censures as reprobate to every good work, denotes an evil habit of mind, not always falling under human cognizance and censure; yet there is enough in the two former, besides the symptoms there may be of the latter, to shew what the men really are. A profession therefore, I say, in men of such a character, can signify nothing, even to this lower purpose, that is, to entitle them to the reputation of religion amongst men. And this will appear from being viewed in several lights.

(1.) Such a contradicted profession is not wont to do so in

other cases. No man can take him to be a friend, who calls himself one against a continued series of actions, which manifestly import habitual hatred, enmity, and malice. No one will call him a good subject, whatever he pretends, who is at present in open hostility against his prince.

(2.) Such a profession in other cases not only gives no reputation amongst men, but brings a disgrace, and casts a reproach upon the person making pretences. When a man's actions are continued, palpable and manifest against his profession, as in this case, it brings, I say, a reproach upon him for pretending to it. And it is so far from being to his reputation that he draws upon himself the suspicion of being either false, or foolish: of being false, that he would design to deceive; of being foolish, that he could hope to succeed in such a case, or, indeed, of both these together.

(3.) A mere profession among men, in every common case, is so far from securing reputation to him who makes it, that it even sinks the reputation of the man that credits it. A very judicious person this to be so easily imposed upon! Therefore he who attempts in such a way to impose upon another, either he, upon whom he makes the attempt, will but regard him as a fool; or will be so accounted himself, because it is supposing him to be one who is capable of being so imposed upon. Which is no less than an attempt to blast the reputation of him, whom he endeavours to deceive.

(4.) A series or course of actions is always to be taken as more significant and expressive of the habitual sense and temper of a person's mind, than words can be thought to be. Words only speak a man's present sense of things, but a continued course of actions shews his habitual sense of them; and is therefore the far greater, and more considerable thing on all accounts.

If I am to form a judgment of another man, it is of more importance to know what the bent of his mind is now, than to know what it was, at this or that particular time. It is manifest that a series of actions is more significant and expressive; whether you compare words and actions together with relation to the same thing, or apply them severally to contrary things.

If you apply words and actions to one and the same thing, let it be for instance to kindness and good-will: suppose then you have for your object a very indigent and distressed person, one exposed to cold and pinched with hunger; let one say to him in this case, "Come be filled, be warmed;" pray what would that signify in comparison of giving him the things which are needful for the body, as the apostle speaks in the

same case. Jam. 2. 16. Which is the most significant expression, such fair words, or such effectual actions?

Again; Let words and actions be applied together to the same thing and to signify ill-will. An unkind word may signify but a sudden passion, and no one will infer habitual hatred from an angry word: but a course of actions may import not only unkindness, but a malicious temper of mind.

Then if we apply these two ways of expressing a man's mind, that is, words and actions, to contraries, the one to signify kindness, the other unkindness; if it be manifest that words are less significant and actions more, surely then that which has less significance in it, is never to be believed against that which has greater. Again,

(5.) No man's words are to be believed against his works. If a man should say and unsay the same things, it may be a hundred times in a day, would you give any credit at all to his words? It is impossible you should. For in any case where I am to exercise human faith, if there be much to be said for and against the thing, I must believe, according to the greater evidence, and cannot do otherwise; I necessarily must take that side in my belief on which the stronger probability lies. But in this case what shall I do? I can here take neither side: for how can a thing be greater or better than itself? I have therefore nothing to do here. I can exercise no faith; for I am not to believe a man's word against his word; when there is equal evidence on the one hand and the other. I am much less to believe his word against his actions, for that would be believing according to the less evidence. And further,

(6.) If a profession were to prevail amongst men, against a series of actions, it would take away the ground and foundations of all public human judgments. For suppose a man arraigned of murder, the business to be inquired into is, what evidence there is of malice prepense. This is the matter to be tried. For the bare taking away the life of a man, is not the crime to be punished. But the thing to be inquired into is, what evidence there is, or what inducements to believe that the thing was designed or purposely done. If against plain facts, and apparent circumstances, to the contrary a man's word should be believed, there could then be no such thing as a human judicature in the world.

(7.) Actions cannot be opposed to a mere verbal or a scenical profession, with greater absurdity, in any case whatsoever, than in the matter of religion. You can suppose no case wherein actions can be opposed to actions, and words or a profession to a course of actions with greater absurdity than in this present case. If we were to think of things manifestly absurd,

we could advance nothing that is more so. Suppose, for instance, a person upon a journey should pretend to be in his right road, and he is told he is going a quite contrary way, and one should follow him, from day to day, and still see him going wrong, though he still says he is on his journey and is going right; what can be more absurd? Now let us use our understanding and consider, whether there be not as ridiculous an absurdity in pretending to religion, against a series of actions, which have a contrary tendency. Do we not all know that religion, in the common notion of it, has a tendency to blessedness; even to glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever in glory, as the end? Can there be a greater contrariety supposed in any one thing to another, than there is in a course of wickedness to the glorifying and enjoying God? Or can any man think, without as palpable absurdity as is possible in any case, that whoredom, drunkenness and debaucheries of all sorts, are means and instruments for the glorifying God, and saving a man's own soul? To say, I am a christian, is to say, I am going to God, to glorify, to enjoy him for ever. But you can suppose no case wherein contrary actions can be opposed to a profession, with more adsurdity than in this.

(8.) We are expressly forbidden, in the Holy Scriptures, to treat, and behave ourselves towards christians that are only so in name and profession, in the same manner as we are obliged to act towards those that are sincere. We are even directed to turn away from those who have a form of godliness but deny the power of it. 2 Tim. 3, 5. When persons are unpersuadable and obstinate in an evil way and vicious course, and will not hear the church they are to be counted as heathens and publicans, (Matt. 18, 17.) and are not to enjoy the reputation of christians, even amongst men, according to the law and judgment of Christ himself in this very matter.

(9.) And lastly. The common profession of religion, in which they seem to bear a part, suffers by their inconsistent conduct and behaviour; and it is very unreasonable, therefore, they should gain by it. They would gain honour from the profession of Christianity, and yet bring a reproach and scandal upon it. And is it to be supposed that their profession, in such a case, should honour them? They do the greatest indignity imaginable to the worthy name which they profess; nay it is blasphemed by them, and through their means is evil spoken of by others.

But yet it may be said, as to all this; "Are we not then to call such christians as profess themselves to be such? Are we not to give them the name?" Truly controversies about names are always to little purpose. It is no great matter by what

name such persons are called. I am willing to give them all that their profession reasonably can be understood to entitle them to. They are by profession christians. But what can that signify to any man's being in reality what he does profess himself to be? I will therefore say, such a one is a professing christian; and what can they make of this? What advantage is it? They are called christians, just with the same propriety that you would call the picture of a man, a man. Though perhaps not altogether with that propriety neither; for truly a good picture is more like a man, than such persons are like real christians. It is a very bad picture indeed, that would not be more like the person it pretends to represent, than many such men are to true, sincere christians. Possibly we may call the carcass of a man, a man, when it is rotten and stinking. "Such a man (you say) lies buried there;" but you know very well that the corpse is not the person himself. And yet there is more propriety in using such language in this case; because such a one was a man, but he whom we speak of never was a christian, and God only knows whether he ever will be one!

We call such persons christians, in like manner as in a play, or theatrical representation. One we call the Grand Seignior, and another an Emperor, according to the parts they act. In this manner, I say, we may call the persons before spoken of, christians; for they perform a part, and make a shew on the stage of the world in performing cheap and easy acts of Christianity. Or it is something like the compliments of one person to another, to whom he would pretend friendship; and under that pretence hides the greatest malice, till he can have an opportunity of shewing it with effect.

Now if such a profession as we have been speaking of, will signify so little to the purpose mentioned in the beginning of this discourse, the giving of a man the reputation of being religious among men; how much less can it signify to that higher purpose, and entitling him to a reward from God? Surely it is less possible to deceive him. And whatever advantage is gained in this world by such an empty, inconsistent profession, it is infinitely less than the final reward of God, which will be given to those, who both profess and practice religion in sincerity.

But before I proceed to this important point, suffer me to exhort you all seriously to consider of something better, than such an empty, self-confuted profession as this, to be a support to you, in such a time as we have lying before us. Surely, in a season of distress, there are no sort of persons whose case is to be lamented so much as theirs, who have nothing

for a support but only this pitiful thing, this empty, self-confuted thing, we have been speaking of. Oh! the cold comfort it will give a man's heart, when he comes to suffer affliction, to say, "I have been called a christian and a protestant; I have professed on the right side, and have gone on in the right way; but, alas! all the while have been fighting against the very design of the religion I have professed, by a contrary life and conversation!" Will this bear up the sinking heart of such a one in a season, when the guilt of his former course, through a long tract of time under the gospel, stares him all at once in the face?

Labour then to do more than barely to profess to know God; since a bare profession will signify nothing with him, and but little with men. And truly it must signify very little to yourselves, to your own comfort and consolation in an evil day; when gloominess, blackness and darkness cover all on every side. There may then possibly, if such a time should come, be room enough for consideration. Labour therefore to know God in good earnest. They that know his name, will put their trust in him. Psal. 9, 10. To have such a refuge as the eye of God in such a world as this is, what solace and satisfaction does it give the soul of a man! especially when there is nothing but darkness and terror on every hand.

To conclude, I shall only take notice to you of one passage in the book of Daniel. "And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he (the king there spoken of) corrupt by flatteries; but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits" or wonders, Dan. 11. 32. These passages refer to the time, when Antiochus fell with fury upon the Jews. A great many of them, when the aspect of the times was frowning upon their religion, did then prevaricate, and do wickedly against the covenant; that is, turned from their religion and complied with his idolatry; but of such of the people as knew their God, it is said, that they should be strong and do exploits. It is a great matter to know God in such a time. He that has the knowledge of God possessing and filling his soul, will have God represented to him as *the all in all;* and this whole world will be before him, as a vain shadow, a piece of pageantry, a dream, a vision of the night. He who is invisible will be always with us, when we once come to be of the number of those who know God, in the manner we profess to do it.

SERMON III*.

2. I now proceed to shew, that a bare profession of religion cannot entitle any one to the rewards of it with God. And the argument is capable of being drawn, as was formerly intimated, from the less to the greater. If it cannot entitle one to a reputation amongst men, much less can it to the reward of it with God. And it will be conclusive two ways. In the first place, that the gain and advantage of the rewards of it with God, is unspeakably greater, than the reputation it can give us among men. If then it cannot entitle one to the less, it cannot to the greater. And then in the next place, that to deceive men, by such a profession, is infinitely less difficult than to deceive God. They who cannot deceive men by such a profession, joined with a practice so grossly wicked as is here expressed by the apostle, can surely much less deceive God. There is, even in the minds of men, a judgment concerning them contrary to that profession: "The trangression of the wicked saith within my heart, there is no fear of God before his eyes."† It speaks that language, carries that signification with it in the mind and judgment of any common observing spectator. What senti-

* Preached February 13, 1680. † Ps. 36. 1.

timent then must it beget in the mind of God, who sees immediately, and without the intervention of any argument, beholding things just as they lie in themselves! But besides this double argument, from the less to the greater, there are several other considerations, that will evince the same thing. As,

(1.) It it the declared rule of God's righteous judgment, to deal with men finally according to their works, and not merely according to their profession; according to what they do, and not to what they pretend. It is the constant tenour of Scripture, (of which you cannot be ignorant who are wont to read your bibles) that God will in the last day, "render to every man according to his works,"* as it is in sundry places. And in the epistles to the Asian churches, our Saviour putting on the person of a judge, thus addresses himself to the one and the other of them; "I know thy works."† Immediate cognizance is taken of them, even of those which are most latent; much more of those which are apparent and manifest, as the works we have spoken of, are. Upon this account he makes himself known to them by the description of one "who trieth the heart, and searches the reins, that he may render to every one according to their works."‡ And he is further represented as one who has "eyes as a flame of fire,"‖ searching into the very things wherein it takes place. And we are told that in that very day, it is not the saying unto him, "Lord! Lord! that shall entitle any one to the kingdom of heaven; but the doing of the will of God the Father who is in heaven."§ Where our Saviour also further assures us, that those who shall make this profession, without a suitable life and conversation, will be rejected in this awful manner, "Depart from me! I know you not."‖‖ But under what notion, or for what reason, are they thus to be abandoned? As workers of iniquity. Thus we see their evil works will cast the balance against all their pretences to that which is good.

(2.) We are further to consider, that it is an unreasonable thing to imagine, that God will give men a title, without giving them a capacity for enjoying the rewards of the blessed state. Certain it is, that mere profession qualifies no one for this happiness; therefore it is not reasonable, that it should entitle any one to it. A man is never a whit the more capable by his profession of dwelling with God, in another world; of immediately beholding with satisfaction his blessed, glorious face. To what purpose is a title, where there is no capacity? It would not consist with the wisdom of God, to divide these

* Rom. 2. 6. † Rev. 2. 2, 9, 13, 19. ‡ Rev. 2. 23. ‖ Rev. 2. 18. § Mat. 7. 21. ‖‖ Ver. 23.

things, which must necessarily concur to one end, namely, to his own glory, and the person's fitness for the enjoyment of Him. Men are wont to be wiser. A title with them fails, when a capacity does. They cease to be entitled to an estate, who by a natural incapacity cannot enjoy it, as for instance, fools and lunatics. Again,

(3.) Their profession is so far from entitling them to the rewards of another world, which belong to those who are sincerely of the true religion; that, being joined with a wicked life and evil practices, it provokes God so much the more highly against them, engages the divine wrath and vindictive justice, so much the more directly to their ruin. And this on several accounts. As,

[1.] Because such a profession demonstrates, that these persons sin against so much the more light; otherwise what makes them profess at all? They who profess religion, as a great part of the world do not, certainly must be supposed to know more. We do not call them professors of the Christian religion, who were born among pagans, and always have lived as such among them. They who profess Christianity, are supposed to live (and do so for the most part) in the enlightened region; in that part of the world through which the gospel-light hath diffused itself. This is therefore a most horrid thing, for the works of darkness, and of the night, to be transacted, where the gospel has made it broad day. And if they, who have opportunity to know more than others, are after all, vicious and immoral, doth not this highly increase their wickedness? Will not this inflame the wrath of God much more against them? And if, in fact, they do know more, is not the provocation the greater? Men certainly know something of what they profess, more or less. For as there is not in the natural world, so neither is there in the moral, any such thing as pure and absolute darkness. And when light shines round a man, it makes him the more deeply guilty, that he can find nothing else to do but to commit wickedness. Light got within! What an aggravation is that of a man's iniquities, or the works of darkness! Light shines in his judgment and conscience! Divine and merciful light projects its beams from above into his very soul, where it is held in unrighteousness! This is that which wrath flames against, even the wrath of God; which "is revealed from heaven against the ungodliness and iniquity of men, who hold the truth of God in unrighteousness." Rom. 1. 18. This is most highly provoking, that where divine truth might expect to find a throne, there it should find only a prison. And therefore, what can ensue upon this, but tribulation and anguish, instead of a reward? It is to him

who knows his master's will and does it not, that many stripes do belong, Luke 12. 47. In like manner, we find the apostle James speaking, "To him that knoweth to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin," Jam. 4. 17. And our Saviour saith thus to the pharisees, "If ye were blind ye should have no sin: but now ye say you see, therefore your sin remaineth." John 9. 40, 41. What! "are we blind also?" say the rulers. They took it for a great reproach not to be thought very discerning. But, says our Lord, "It had been well for you if you had been blind; for since you are so knowing, your sin remains, and you are absolutely inexcusable."

[2.] It follows of consequence, that they sin with malice who can allow themselves to join wickedness with their profession; and outface, as it were, the light of that truth, which directly teaches them otherwise. For, in the case now supposed, the interest of Christ and his religion has already, as it were, fought its way through all the outworks; and there is now no further opposition but the fortress of the heart, the seat of love or hatred, of kind propensity and inclination to God and Christ, or of enmity and malice to them. The business now lies wholly at the door of the will. By how much the more of the will, by so much the more of enmity and malice there is in sinning. By how much the more of light, so much the more of will; and the more profession there is, so much the more of light. In this series do these things lie. "If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there is no more sacrifice for sin." Heb. 10. 26. If you sin against this sacrifice, you are not to expect another. Your peace therefore is to be made this way, or not at all. And when a man's knowledge, as well as his profession, is against him; and his opposition to God and the design of Christianity is resolved into nothing, but mere will; there is not the least pretence, or the shadow of a reason left to justify his conduct. All things that could have induced me to be at all a christian, should also have induced me to be a true christian. For there can be no reason brought that a man should be a christian in profession, but the same reason will be equally conclusive that he should be one in reality, and in truth. And therefore, when reason, judgment, conscience and profession, go together and are all on one side, how miserably exposed and naked is such a person, who does not fall in cordially with God, in a way of holiness, because he will not! It is with them as with the Jews to whom our Lord says, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." John 5. 40.

[3.] It must be the more provoking, because there is hypocrisy in this conjunction. It cannot be without hypocrisy, that

a man should lead a wicked life, and yet profess the true religion. It is very true, it looks like a very gross sort of hypocrisy, that persons should profess religion, and yet lead such lives as are visibly abominable. It is not indeed of the finer sort of hypocrisy; but by how much the grosser it is, by so much the more insolent it is. The affront is the greater, that a man should sin even in the face of heaven itself, and commit such wickedness as all the world will cry shame of, and this under the cloak of profession. Again,

[4.] There is most perfidious falsehood, and treachery in such a conduct; and therefore it must be the more provoking. For, in this case, men not only sin against law, since all sin is against law, "for where there is no law there is no transgression," (Rom. 4. 15.) but against the covenant too. They who profess to know God, as we have said again and again, profess to be christians. If such therefore lead wicked and immoral lives, they sin as well against the covenant as the law; and in their way of sinning, there is treachery both against Christ, and the God of heaven.

The covenant betwixt God and his people, who are visibly related to him, is illustrated in Scripture by the marriage contract. And those who break it, God threatens "he will judge, as they who break wedlock are judged, with fury and jealousy," Ezek. 16. 38. Now jealousy is allowed to be the most fervent of all the passions; and distinguished from common wrath and anger, even by this peculiar consideration in the object, the being thus related. And it is observable in what style he speaks afterward. Having discarded his people and cast them off, that they should be no longer related to him; "then," says he, "I will make my fury towards thee to rest, and my jealousy shall depart from thee," (ver. 42.) that is, to cease for ever. Thus we see the relation being dissolved, they are no longer the objects of jealousy. Indeed while they continue a professing people there is a visible relation, and consequently they are objects of jealousy; but when the injured party has sufficiently vindicated himself, this vindictive passion ceases; and whatever anger and resentment may remain, it is jealousy no longer. Again,

[5.] They who join a religious profession and wicked practices together most highly provoke God; because they sin with the highest indignity against God, against Christ, and the religion which they profess. And it is very plain that they do so, in as much as herein they both mock God, and misrepresent him. They mock his sovereignty, and misrepresent his holiness. It is a plain mockery to him, as he is the Ruler of the world. For men to profess to know God, to own him as their

God, and yet visibly to affront him by the most insolent wickedness; what is this like, but putting on the purple robe, and saying, "Hail Master!" and spitting in his face at the same time? It is in a case similar to this, namely, that a man's reaping according to what he sows, that the apostle warns christians not to deceive themselves. For says he, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap," (Gal. 6. 7.) intimating that they would be greatly deceived, if they expected to reap the reward of eternal life.

Moreover, such a conduct is a horrid misrepresentation of God, particularly as to his holiness; as if he were one who could dispense with his injunctions to men of being really holy, and sincerely good, and be satisfied instead thereof with appearances, with mere shew and pretence. A most odious representation of God, as if he were like the impure deities of the pagan world! You see with what severity he himself speaks in a case like this; "Take heed," says he, "lest there should be among you a man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose hearts turn away from the Lord their God—lest there be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; And it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying; I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst: The Lord will not spare him; but then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy shall smoke against that man; and all the curses, that are written in the book, shall lie upon him; and the Lord shall blot his name out from under heaven." Deut. 29. 18, 19, 20. Observe here the provoking thing, on which the emphasis is put. It is that a man should walk in a vain course of wickedness, and yet bless himself in his heart, and say, "I shall have peace for all this." Provoking it must be, because it is a horrid, reproachful misrepresentation of the most holy God; as if he intended to be a patron of wickedness, or as if it were indifferent to God how men lived, or all one to him whether they were righteous or wicked. "And does the sinner indeed think so? I will make him pay dearly for the thought! All the peace and satisfaction that he has taken in that thought, or enjoyed in that delusive dream, shall cost him dear! for because of this shall my jealousy smoke against him."

[6.] To join profession with such a wicked practice, is to make that very profession itself a lie; and a lie, in this case, cannot but have high provocation in it, if you consider these things.

First. Consider it is a lie to *him* who knows it to be

so. He is an impudent liar indeed, who tells a lie to a person, whilst he himself is sensible that such person knows he lies. To come and hold forth such an appearance so flagrantly contradicted, to *one* so wise and incapable of being deceived as God is; what can be more provoking? and therefore you find that this is mentioned as the aggravating circumstance of the crime of Ananias and Sapphira; that they lied to the Holy Ghost, (Acts 5. 3.) whose eye could clearly see through every disguise. Again,

Secondly. To lie in this case must needs be very provoking, inasmuch as it carries in it an implicit denial of the omniscience of God; that is, by such a conduct I speak or do that, which is equivalent to such denial. I do indeed by my profession declare my belief, that God sees all things, and that to him nothing can be secret; but at the same time by my life and conversation, I do more strongly declare that he neither sees nor knows. And what is this but to deny God to be what he is? It is, as it were, as much as in me lies, to strike out the eye of the Deity. "Tush! He does not know, neither is there knowledge in the Most High, (Psal. 10. 11.) he forgets it or does not behold it." Strange brutishness! "He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall he not know?" Psal. 94. 10. This is to make the omniscient God like a "blind, deaf idol in a heathen temple, that hath eyes but seeth not, and ears but heareth not. Psal. 115. 4, 5. What a provocation is this! Moreover,

Thirdly. It is most repugnant to the nature of God to make this lying profession, and is therefore abominable. "To cover hatred with lying lips," says the wise man, "is abominable to the Lord. Prov. 10. 18. Even such an abomination as his very nature detests. It is against his nature to prevaricate. For though he is Almighty, yet he is pleased to have this said concerning him, again and again, in his holy word, that he cannot lie; nay it is impossible to him to do so, notwithstanding his omnipotence. It is a thing so repugnant to the true God, so contradictory to the sincerity and simplicity of the divine nature, that you can imagine nothing more hateful and provoking.

Fourthly, It is a participation of the diabolical nature to be an habitual liar in such a case as this. For we know the devil is the father of lies. "Why has Satan filled thine heart, says Peter to Ananias and Sapphira, to lie to the Holy Ghost?" Acts 5. 3. It makes a man a devil before God, when the habitual course of his profession is nothing else but a lie. And that it is a lie and ought to be so deemed by us, many passages do clearly demonstrate. "If a man say he has fellowship with

God, and walketh in darkness, he lieth and does not the truth." The man who does thus, is guilty of a lie in practice; for God is light and in him is no darkness at all. 1 John 1. 6. So that if any one professes he has fellowship with God, and yet allows himself in works of darkness, he is guilty of a practical lie. He does by his practice give the lie to his profession. The word rendered fellowship, κοινωνιαν, signifies participation and converse, but we may understand it in a greater latitude, than to signify converse with him only, since it signifies to have an interest in him, and relation to him, and is therefore of the same import with knowing God. Israel shall say "My God we know thee, but Israel hath cast off the thing that is good," Hos. S. 2, 3. There was a laying claim to God, as if they had a part or portion in him, when there was no such thing. It was but a lie. I know the blasphemy of them who say they are jews, and are not, but do lie, Rev. 2. 9. As if our Lord had said; "I take it for a high blasphemy against me, and my name; against the religion of which I have been the Author, that such persons should pretend to be of it, or to belong to me." It is at once a scandalous lie and blasphemy itself.

Thus it appears, that they who lead such wicked, immoral lives, are so far from entitling themselves to the divine rewards by their profession, that they only expose themselves seven times more to the wrath of God, than if they had never professed at all. This effectually demonstrates, to do which was the main design of what has been hitherto said upon this subject, the vanity and folly of a mere profession of religion, without a suitable practice, let men's secret motives and views be what they will.

SERMON IV.*

HAVING in the foregoing discourses shewn the nature of, as well as the secret motives to, a mere profession of religion, attended with vicious practices; and also the vanity of it both with respect to God and man; I shall now by way of use draw some inferences from the whole.

1. That such as make a profession do notwithstanding their flagitious practices highly justify the religion, to which they pretend. All that has been said serves to this purpose, to let you see the excellency of religion; and to this even the very worst of men do give testimony by their profession, how inconsistent soever be their practice.

Wisdom is justified by the actions of her children, and the testimony of her very enemies. The testimony of an enemy is, of all others, the most convincing, and carries the most demonstrative evidence; because that can never be understood to come from inclination. It is a thing which deserves to be well thought of, that the very worst of men have such inward notices and sentiments of things as evidently imports, that the way they hate they cannot but in their judgment approve. Their profession is from an emanation of eternal light and truth, let into their minds and consciences. They are of such a judgment and cannot be otherwise. Light shews itself,

* Preached February 20th. 1680.

and cannot but carry evidence with it. Conviction extorts profession from those, who consider the grounds upon which the truth of religion is established. So that by the way it is amazing to think, that men should hate others for practising the very things, which they themselves in their own judgment and conscience approve.

What a justification is this of religion in the sincere professors of it? One might even say it confidently to a wicked, profane, debauched christian, "Thou who hatest such and such for their strict walking, and holy conversation, they do more agree with thee, than thou dost with thyself." Thus do but take the real sentiments of the most vicious man, who is a professor of the Christian religion, and the life and conversation of the godly and virtuous man, and you will find them correspond well enough one with another. The one says in his mind, and judgment, and by his profession also, "I own it to be a very reasonable thing, that God should be loved, feared, and served above all." The other does so, and this is his practice to love and serve and fear the most high God. The one also says; "The wrath of God ought to be greatly more dreaded than the wrath of man; and that it is a matter of greater moment to please God, than all the world beside." The other actually does what the other thinks and judges he ought to do. The wicked professor, if the question be asked, will acknowledge, that it is much more considerable to him to save his soul, than to please the flesh: but the truly good man practises according to this apprehension. So that between the wicked man's notions, and the godly man's practice, there is a fair agreement; but, in the mean time, what a disagreement between the persons themselves! Thus having shewn, that persons who make a profession, do, notwithstanding their flagitious practices, highly justify the religion to which they pretend; I proceed to the next inference.

2. Whilst nominal professors justify those who are real christians, they evidently condemn themselves. Such professors as these must, of all men in the world, be the most self-condemned. "Out of thine own mouth," may it be said of them, "will I condemn thee." Luke 19. 22. And the like condemnation they may expect to hear at least out of the mouth of their Judge. "Thou knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent; Thou therefore that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?" says the apostle St. Paul, addressing himself to the Jews of this character. Rom. 2. 18.

It were a hard thing to be resolved, if we should expostulate with such persons, and demand of them; "Pray why do you

make any profession at all? what tolerable account can you give, why you profess to know God; to be of the true religion, or indeed of any religion at all?" It is true, as to some they are of the Christian religion by fate, not by choice. They are thrown upon the religion which they profess. They owe their being christians to the external circumstances of their condition. They were born in such a country, of such parents, it is the religion of the nation where they live, the religion of their ancestors, and it may be they know nothing of another. Many are christians because they cannot help it; but with others it is very plain, that their profession is the emanation of internal light; it is the genuine product of the conviction of their own consciences, that this which they profess must be the true religion. And thus surely all persons must conclude, who ever set themselves to consider seriously and impartially its evidence and internal excellence. But the greater part never do this. Whereas if any man could be brought once to consider this point, his profession would be the product of his inward light. A light perhaps too weak to govern his practice; but too strong to be expelled by force, or extinguished by his own false and delusive reasonings. They profess those things to be true, which they would be glad in their hearts were not so. And their light, though it is too weak to rule them, is not too weak to affright them. In a word, it is too strong to be mastered by any thing they themselves, or others, have to say to the contrary.

I would in this manner appeal to any such person if he hath the common understanding of a man, with reference to the great articles of his own creed. You say, you "believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth." And, what! is it not most reasonable, in your own judgment and conscience, that you should do so? It may be you had rather that an article, directly opposite to this, were true. But do you think it more likely, that this world did some time or other rise up of itself, than that it was made by an almighty, wise, invisible Being? You say, you profess to "believe in his Son Jesus Christ your Lord." And is not this, if the matter be examined, far more reasonable to believe, that Jesus is the Son of God, and is in right and title your Lord; than that he was mortal, and came into the world to cheat mankind? Is it more likely that the gospel, of which he was the Author, was all a cheat? that his religion, which was sealed by so numerous and glorious miracles, and brought down to our knowledge in such unquestionable records, was an imposture? Is it likely, when he had "witnessed that good confession before Pontius Pilate," that he sealed it with his blood to deceive the world, or that he died only to mock mankind? If men would consider,

their profession would certainly be the emanation of their light, and the conviction they have of the truth of what they profess. They must however be sensible, that this profession is a standing testimony against them. Nay, though they profess they know not what, nor consider the grounds and reasons of it, yet they are self-condemned.

But why do they profess, if they do not understand? Why do they not understand what they may? They profess they know God. Either they do know him, or they know him not. If they do not, why do they profess at all? If they do know him to be God, what a soul-commanding thought should that be! "In Judah is God known, and his name is great in Israel." Psalm 76. 1. Has not Israel known God? A thing not to be imagined, that he should be ignorant of him. We have then, for the most part, the seminal principles of true religion; which only need to be reflected on, to enable us to discern how reasonable and coherent a frame that of the Christian religion is. Which when we come to apprehend it, and consider its excellent nature, the more we find it deserves to be considered; and, of consequence, professing with the more knowledge, the greater must our condemnation be, if our lives are repugnant to it. For can any man believe these two things, that there is a God who made heaven and earth, and that Jesus Christ is his own Son; and after that believe that it is more reasonable to disobey, than to obey that great God; or be subject to him, who bought us with his blood, and purchased to himself a dominion over them and all mankind? I would fain see the man, and hear what he could say for himself, who professing to believe, that there is one Creator of all things, and one Redeemer, who has procured to himself a dominion over all by his death, shall say, "I hold all this; but I will withal hold, that it is a great deal more reasonable to affront than to obey them." What man would dare to say so? Who can believe there is such a God, who, by the right of creation and redemption, claims a governing power over them; and yet imagine that it can be safe for them to live in open hostilities against so rightful a dominion and irresistible power? In a word, who can say, "I believe there is a judgment to come, but I have no need to prepare for it? It is full as safe to put all to the venture, as to prepare that it may go well with me in that day."

All these things considered, what self-condemning creatures must these professors be! especially when the secrets of all hearts must be opened, and all these latent sentiments be exposed to public view! How will men quake when they come to be expostulated with, by so high and indisputable an authority! when terrible majesty shall plead with them, in the

following manner! "Was that religion, which you professed, true, or was it false? If it was false, why did you profess it? If true, why did you not practise it? You either believed there was a God, or that there was none. If you believed the notion of a God was but a fancy, why did you worship him? But if you did believe there was a God, why did you not constantly obey and serve him?" Again, "Either you took Jesus Christ to be an impostor, or a Saviour and Lord. If you took him to be the former, why should you be called after his name? Why did you number yourselves among his deluded followers? But if you took him to be the Son of God, why did you not subject your will, your soul to that government of his, which he founded in his blood?" Oh! then, what a confounded creature must that be, who has lived under such a profession, and in such wickedness at the same time, all along! When such a one shall remember with regret that ever he was a christian, or that he ever heard of the name of Christ! When it shall be the matter of his too late wish, "O that I had been born a Scythian or Barbarian! That I had lived in a den or cave, and had never seen man; or had lived without having an opportunity of ever hearing that there was a God!"

3. We may further take notice, how little there is of shame and modesty left in the world, with reference to the behaviour of men towards God. We find, with relation to human affairs, and transactions with men, there is such a thing as shame; which, as bad as the world is, has a great power and influence over them. If it were not for this, the influence that shame and common decency have in the world, there would be no living; and it would be a great deal worse. If it were not a shame to lie openly drunk in the streets, wallowing in one's own vomit; if it were not a shame to commit filthiness in the sight of the sun; if it were not a shame to be unclean, or to be a thief; or if men in general had given over all regard to a good reputation among their fellow-creatures; the world would certainly abound with worse and more numerous monsters.

And this useful passion evidently influences men in this very matter of professing, as it restrains them from making professions that are not suitable to them. An ignorant plowman would be ashamed to profess himself a statesman; or a cobler, a merchant. But how strange is it, that no modesty or shame have any influence in this case! That is, in the affairs and deportment of men towards God.

The matter is this. In reference to the things which they have to do one with another, men are awake and in their wits; but with relation to God, and the concerns of religion, they

are in a continual sleep and dream. And you know we do not use to reflect with regret upon the remarkable incongruities in our dreams. When therefore men, who connect together the most incoherent things in a dream, can do the like in matters of religion, it is very plain they are not in their wits. We reckon that none but such as are out of their wits; none but such as are fit to be in chains and a dark room, would, in their restraint and under the rod, call themselves lords or dukes, and I know not what names besides, of the greatest sound. But I beseech you consider the case with attention. Is there not a greater disagreement between the spirit and character of a wicked man, and the names of a believer; an heir of salvation, and an expectant of glory? Is there not an unspeakable greater disagreement? And yet here, men are not ashamed to profess at this rate; to own a profession that imports them to be true believers, the sons of God, and heirs of heaven; while they are abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate.

4. It appears from hence, that there is as little fear of God among men, as there is of shame. "The wickedness of the wicked says in my heart the fear of God is not before his eyes." Psal. 36. 1. Whatever they fear, they do not fear the Almighty. They make no scruple of doing things which import an absolute denial of his existence. What a tremendous thought is this to a considering soul! Methinks this should strike with consternation, even a soul made of earth. What! does their practice amount to a denial of God? O think what this imports; what it is to deny his existence! This is to throw all things into confusion. This is to ruin the creation, as much as in us lies; and to take away the root of all things, and consequently the things themselves. Finally, this is to commit felony on myself and my own life. How! art thou a man, if there be not a God?

But it is the practical denial of God that we chiefly speak of; a denial of his authority, and the rights of the divine government. Like Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice?" Exod. 5. 2. This impious king speaks more according to the truth of the case, and consistently with himself, when he says, "I know him not." But so rooted is that power, and right of governing in the Godhead, and so necessarily does it result from the supposition of a God, and a reasonable creature in being; that it is impossible there should be a denying of that governing power, without denying his being too. "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God;" (psal. 14. 1.) that is, does not believe there is no God, so much as wish there were none.

However, in respect to men, fear has great influence. How

will it, for instance, restrain men from conspiring against the government! How are men afraid to say, or do any thing, that may admit of any such interpretation; or that looks like a design to subvert the government, under which they ive! But how strange is it, that men have no fear in them with reference to the divine government, unto which they profess a subjection! Will any man look upon himself as a loyal subject, for speaking good words of the king? Especially when it could be proved, that he was forming designs against his person and authority. One would think a man's heart should never endure to think that he is liable to such a charge as this, with respect to God the King of kings. Thou, O wretch! art guilty of practically denying, and abandoning, the Author of thy life and being, the very Father of thy spirit, and him who gave thee breath. Thou hast marked thyself out as a common enemy to the creation of God. And how can that man expect to draw another breath, who breathes only by the favour of that God whom he denies?

5. As to the main purposes of religion, it is plainly no great matter, what religion a wicked man is of. It is all one whether he be of a false religion, or falsely of the true; except only that his case, on this latter account, is worse. As the apostle says, with respect to the Jews, "Circumcision profiteth, if a man keep the law; but if he break the law, his circumcision goes for uncircumcision." Rom. 2. 25. Thy baptism profits, if thou keepest the gospel; but if thou observest it not, thy baptism shall signify nothing. Though a man cannot be saved under any religion, yet he may perish under any one. What a poor pretence is it when one has nothing to trust to and rely upon, as the ground of his eternal hope, but only that he is an orthodox man! An orthodox son of this or that church! So far it is well. But what does it signify to be an orthodox drunkard, an orthodox swearer, an orthodox sabbath-breaker? If such would but admit one to reason soberly with them, I would ask them, "What! do you not believe, that holiness is as essential to Christianity, as truth? Do you not think that the decalogue is of as good authority, as the articles of your creed? is there not the same authority for the *agenda*, as there is for the *credenda* of a christian? Has not any man, that owns the Christian name, as great obligations to be pious, sober, and chaste; as he has to be true, or right in his principles?" There is certainly the same authority for the one as for the other. What does a man hope he shall gain, by tearing the essential parts of the Christian religion asunder, as much as in him lies; or by dividing Christianity from itself?

6. We see how weak a thing the light of an unregenerate person is, and how little reason such a one has to glory in his profession. How weak, I say, is this light! too weak to restrain him from such gross inconsistencies as these are: as weak it must be, since it permits him to run into the most palpable absurdities; and even suffers him to make a profession that he knows God, the great Lord and Ruler of all things, whilst he lives in a continual disobedience to him. With some, indeed, the knowledge of the true religion does signify more. We read of some that by the knowledge of God, have escaped the corruptions of the world, through lusts; (2 Pet. 2. 20.) but with many others, you see their light is so impotent and inefficacious a thing, that it cannot withhold them from making beasts of themselves, instead of christians. And that is a doleful thing to think of, that a man should have light to no other purpose, than to damn him! A light, which upon all other accounts is darkness, and makes his profession of religion so much the worse and more dangerous. To this purpose our blessed Saviour speaks, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Mat. 6. 23. The knowledge of some christians is no better than mere paganism. Whatever it is, they do the same things they would do if they had none. As to certain points indeed they are of such a belief; but they walk and practise, as if they were of a quite contrary faith. How weak then is their light, and how deplorable is the case of such men!

Do we not see then how little they have to boast of? Such a profession as this is can surely be a matter of no glory to them. Nor is to be accounted so, any more than we would esteem the title of lord or knight, a glory to the man who is forced to go naked or in filthy rags every day. So they walk in their nakedness, like accursed creatures; as they are implied to be by the blessing which is pronounced on those, who keep their garments so, as that their nakedness may not appear. Rev. 16. 15. It is but a poor glory, and empty honour to be called christians on such terms!

7. We farther learn, how mysterious a piece of self-contradiction such a wicked professor is, and how unhappy his condition must necessarily be. A christian, of an unchanged heart and vicious life, has one and the same object of worship and contempt. It is a strange kind of monster that this must needs be. No eye hath ever seen any thing more monstrous! Having the head and face of a christian, joined with the hands and heart of an atheist. So true and pertinent was the saying of a noble Italian lord, "That there is no monster in all the world, worse than a speculative atheist, except one; and that

is the practical atheist, who is the more horrid monster of the two."

How unhappy then must such a person be! To every good work reprobate, and yet a professor! How uneasy must his life be, who must do many things, which, in substance are good works, that he may keep up the shew of religion, let them be never so much his aversion! How uneasy a life, I say, is this to go against the grain, and to do things in a continued course for which a man has no heart nor relish! To come into the assemblies of God's people when he had rather be somewhere else; and many other such like things must he do to keep up a profession. This is indeed a most grievous thing, for a man to have only an artificial religion, which proceeds from no vital principle, and perfectly disagrees to the habit of his soul, and the bent and temper of his heart. And that a man should toil at it all his days, is a sad case; especially when it is considered, that it is but for a shadow, for that which will turn to no account, or rather to a heavy one.

8. Lastly. We see hence the necessity of renewing grace. This is absolutely necessary, not only to reconcile man to God, but also to reconcile him to himself: to make the man to agree with himself; who without the grace and spirit of regeneration, neither agrees with God, nor his own soul. He fights with heaven, and his whole life is a continual fighting against himself. He practises wickedly against his profession of godliness; directly contrary to all his worship and his own prayers. Methinks therefore, this should make such a man long to feel the power of regenerating grace, that he may bring things to an agreement between God and himself. For the light which makes him profess, does not govern his practice. It is too weak, as you have seen, and insufficient for this purpose. There needs something more to change him, and to give him a right spirit; and when that is done, then all will be well. Then he can take pleasure in God, his worship and converse, and to no good work will he be reprobate any more.

But here a great *question* might arise; to wit, "What should a man do in the mean time, who has not attained, as yet, the regenerating grace of the Spirit of Christ? Is it not better (that so there may be a greater harmony of things) that he should give over professing, since he has only that in his own power? For it is in his power to give up his profession, though not to change his heart and life. Or, at least, should he not do so till there be a change, that may bring his profession and the course of his walking, to a perfect consistence and agreement with one another?" To this I answer briefly:

(1.) Whereas there must be a change in order to an agreement

between profession and practice, certainly that must be changed which is wrong. It is very evident the change ought to be where the fault is. He professes a religion which is true; the alteration then must not be there, but in his spirit and his course, which are wrong. And,

(2.) As the question supposes the laying down a profession as being in one's own power, there must and ought to be a greater regard here to moral power than natural; that is, to what I may do, rather than to what I can do. There is nothing truly possible to me, but what is lawfully possible. And so it is not in my power to go and profess a false religion, and abandon the true.

(3.) That till there be a change made it is better to give over professing and the like, is to talk impertinently; because there is no moment of time, wherein it is permitted to live in an unconverted state. Do we think it lawful for us, so much as one moment, to live in rebellion against God, and his Son Jesus Christ? And therefore,

(1.) That power we want must be sought for, and that immediately; and be prayed for with an earnestness suitable to the exigence of the case: saying, "Lord I am a monster, as true as I am a man amongst men! I shall be a lost creature, till I am changed!" Therefore do not talk of laying down your profession a moment; because you do not know but divine grace may set all right in the next: only there should be a looking up to heaven, with a continual fervent desire of it. And methinks no one, who sees cause enough to suspect his case to be bad, should go away without lifting up a craving eye to God for assistance; saying, "Lord! for that grace that may work this necessary change! That may change me from being a self-repugnant creature, and liable to thy wrath; to a happy consistency with myself, and a meetness to enjoy thy rewards, and the inheritance of the saints in light!"

And, to conclude, what obligation to thankfulness and praise lies upon those, whom the grace of God has brought matters to a blessed agreement with themselves! So that their continual profession is the product of a new nature; and their habitual temper and practice ever harmonious and consistent with it. Oh what a blessed case is this!

SERMON V.*

WE have, in the foregoing discourses, already shewn in the general, that men may profess the true religion, and yet lead very wicked lives; be "abominable, disobedient, and to every good work reprobate:" and of consequence, that they who do so, may be said by just interpretation to deny the religion they profess.

From these two propositions connected together, we have shewn, what sort of profession is here meant; what the persons who make it, may be notwithstanding as to their moral character; moreover, whence it is that any man should make a profession of religion, when the temper of his spirit, and the whole course of his practice are so repugnant to it; and finally, the folly and vanity of all this have been largely shewn, both with respect to God and men: inasmuch as, by this means, men do not acquire the reputation of being what they would be thought to be, that is religious; nor have any share in the divine rewards of religion, in the future state. To all which have been subjoined several important inferences and useful reflections. But there is yet further use to be made, partly for the detection and conviction of such as do vainly profess; and partly for direction, that we ourselves may not do so. If it

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then be asked, "What sort of persons are they, who may be understood to overthrow their profession, and to make it a mere nullity, or of no significance?" I answer; that though there are indeed sundry sorts of professors, who may be said so to do, yet all are reducible to these two general heads.

I. Such as do profess the true religion, but so falsified and corrupted, as that the very object of their profession is strangely altered from itself. They profess what, originally, was the true religion; but as they profess it, it is not true. Or else,

II. Such as do profess what is actually, even still the true religion, but do it very untruly; that is, are not sincere in that profession.

I. The first sort of persons in the Christian world, who may be said to overthrow their profession, and to make it a mere nullity, are those who profess the true religion, but greatly falsified and adulterated: that is, they profess what, originally, was the true religion; but as they profess it, it is not true.

Now, though this class is capable of sundry subdivisions, yet since our part of Christendom is generally divided into those who are of the Roman communion, and those who protest against it, I shall only speak of them; that is, of those who call themselves catholics: and not of all them neither; but only of such as do practically hold such principles, superadded to pure Christianity, as must necessarily make it another religion. I mean, when they hold such principles practically, as corrupt the true, simple Christian religion, or the genuine gospel of Christ, as it was delivered by him and his apostles. For indeed amongst those who are members of the church of Rome, not only charity, but justice obliges us to distinguish thus far: that, as it is possible for a man to hold very good principles, which have no good influence upon his spirit and practice; so it is possible also, that men may in speculation hold some very bad principles, which have not that poisonous influence on their spirit and practice, to which they naturally tend. And therefore, if what is the substance of the Christian religion be found in them, notwithstanding many corrupt additions and gross falsehoods; if by the special favour and grace of God the true Christian principles only, become impressive on them, and the false corruptive ones not so, which are of human invention; these are an exempt sort of persons, whom I have nothing to do with in the present case.

But because I must be within those limits, which it is fit the text should prescribe to me, I shall only treat upon one principle, which is practical, as we have reason to apprehend, with multitudes of that communion: and which the very terms of the text do lead us to take notice of. "They profess to know

God, but in works they deny him." So, in like manner, those, whom I allude to of the church of Rome, profess to know God. But what God is it? Who, or what is that God which they practically own? Is it not another than the true and living God, whom they practically acknowledge as such? It is well if it be not so, with the generality of that way and persuasion! I mean that very God, of whom you have a description given by St. Paul, in his second epistle to the Thessalonians: namely, "the man of sin, the son of perdition: who exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God." They do profess indeed to know the living and true God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: but the God whom they practically own, serve and obey, is this same God that is here referred to by the apostle. Their god is a man, and that man a monster of men. In respect of pride and malice, more a devil than a man. In respect of sensuality and impurity, more a beast than a man; as you know he is so called in the Holy Scriptures.

This is actually the God, who is practically acknowledged as such by too great a number of professing christians in the world. The principle therefore I now insist upon, is the ascribing a divinity to that creature, whether it be one single person, or a succession of persons, or a community according to some. This principle so far as it is practical, and governs their religion, makes it quite another thing than what it truly and really is in its original purity. And though it be very true, they will tell you, that they only intend or mean an underdeity, or a vicarious sort of godhead, which they place in this creature; and so think to salve the matter by alleging, that they do not idolize nor deify him; I therefore desire the following things may be considered.

1. That if it should be said, it is only a vicegereney which they ascribe to this same god of theirs, yet if their, hearts terminate on him whom they call vicegerent, and their religion is carried no higher, this is to deify him as much as in them lies. What does it signify to acknowledge in speculation one superior to him, while in a practical sense their minds and hearts, and the sum of their religion, do centre and terminate here? As to multitudes of those who call themselves catholics, they trust in no higher object than the pope. All their reliance for pardon and salvation is ultimately on him, and all their obedience and subjection terminates on him. To call him therefore vicegerent only, when he is practically made the ultimate object of their religion, does not salve the matter at all.

2. I say further and inquire, Where is their charter for this vicegerency? If they call him God's vicegerent, who has nothing to shew for it, and so accordingly place a religious trust in him, what does it signify to say, that the respect and honour they pay to him is as to God's vicegerent? If a man should pretend to be for the king, while he really rebels against him, will that pretence be any excuse for me, if I fall in with them who are under this leader? There wants so much as a colourable pretence for this vicegerency. It would make some blush, others laugh to hear the allegations they bring for it. How weak are some! how ridiculous are others! how remote, absurd, and insignificant are they all indeed taken together! That passage, for instance, the words of our Lord to Peter upon his remarkable confession of his Messiahship is much insisted upon: to wit, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Matt. 16. 18. 19. But how this should signify any thing to the popedom, I cannot conceive. What a strange fetch must it be to imagine any thing in such a passage to this purpose! No more power was given to him than what was given to the rest of the apostles. For to all the apostles as well as Peter, Christ gave the power of the keys, as it is called, as appears from that parallel passage in the gospel of John; where we are told, that Christ after his resurrection "breathed upon his disciples, and said unto them all, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose soever sins *ye* remit, they are remitted unto them: and whose soever sins *ye* retain they are retained." John 20. 23. Which is the same thing with saying to all the apostles, "I give unto *you* the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and what you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and what you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Matt. 16. 19. That is, you acting according to the rules I left you, what you do on earth of this nature, shall be ratified in heaven too. But how impertinently is this drawn and appropriated to Rome! There is not the least mention of the grant of this power being confined to Peter, as bishop of Rome; and his successors as such. Nor is it to be imagined, what colour there should be of any reasoning from thence to this purpose, for it no more appears, that Peter was ever a settled, residing bishop at Rome, than that Paul was; who, it is most apparent, had a settled residence there. No such thing is recorded of Peter in the Holy Scriptures; and as to what is said in history on this matter, is variously disputed this way and that; though indeed it need not to be so, because it can signify nothing to the purpose. Those who say Peter was there as well as Paul, do also say, that they both suffered

martyrdom in the same year. Besides, if there were a primacy to be settled where Peter did reside, it should rather have been at Jerusalem; where it is certain he had his residence for some time, and where it is more likely he presided, than at Rome. And because it is said to Peter only, "Feed my sheep!" are we to conclude from thence, that he must be the universal bishop? Is not this charge to be considered as given to the rest of the apostles, as well as to Peter? and not only so, but to all the ministers of the gospel? So idle and trifling are these pretences to primacy for Peter, as bishop of Rome, and his successors as such!

3. They do, at least many of them, very frequently ascribe to this same god of theirs more than vicegerency, and what indeed is inconsistent with that state and character. They do it professedly; and if hereupon they do it practically, as we have great reason to apprehend multitudes may, then it is most certain that this false God of theirs, is the only object of their religion. Upon this point, because it is so much to my purpose, I shall largely insist. In the

(1.) Place, it is very apparent, that they give to this fictitious god of theirs, the titles that do peculiarly belong to the great God and his Christ. Nothing is more ordinary and common with them, than to call the pope by the titles of *beatissime* and *sanctissime Pater!* The *most blessed and most holy Father;* and other titles they are not afraid to apply to him, which the holy Scriptures give to God and his Son. A person speaking of one of the popes says, "His name is Wonderful;" assuming that which is spoken of Christ in Isaiah, Isa. 9. 6. and applying it unto him. They call him also, in express terms, the *head* of the church, the *husband* of the church, the *foundation* of the church; titles peculiarly belonging unto Christ. One says, "He is the *head, excluso Christo;*" that is, *Christ being excluded,* and without any consideration of him. "He is (saith he) the *achme*; the supreme, and *chief* of the church, *Summum caput ecclesiæ.* succeeding in the room of Christ; and all power is translated from Christ to him." Not derived, but transferred; as if it were removed from Christ, or as if he ceased from his primacy over the church, and transferred it himself to this vicarious God. For this they think a modest name, and that the power is lodged in him, so as to reside in Christ no longer. And hereupon, though they do speculatively own a superior head of the church, yet practically they own no higher, when this notion obtains among them. Here their religion stops. Here it seems to terminate, and to go no higher. For how little suspicion do they discover, that those sins are yet unpardoned,

which the pope pardons! Or how little dread appears among them, of having his judgment reversed by a superior judgment! And so they speak of this headship, which they attribute to the pope over the church, and represent it in the same manner in which it is attributed unto Christ; that is, they say the influence of life is communicated by him to the church; and represent it as flowing from this fictitious head of theirs. But

(2.) Such scriptures also, as speak of the dignity, power, and greatness of Christ, they do most familiarly apply to the pope; some ridiculously, and others impiously, even to blasphemy itself. That passage in the eighth psalm, is an instance; "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour, and hast made him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." This passage which the apostle applies to Christ, they apply to the pope. And it is not to be imagined with what absurdity they do minutely apply the several following particulars to his holiness. As where it is said, Thou hast given him to have dominion over the fowls of the air, by that they would have the gentiles understood; by the oxen, they understand the jews; by the beasts of the field, the pagans; and by the sheep, the generality of christians; and finally, by the fish of the sea, or whatsoever passeth through the paths thereof, which are also said to be put under his feet, they understand purgatory. So ridiculous that nothing can be more so!

But in other of their applications they are most horribly blasphemous. They have not scrupled to apply to him such passages as these; "I will make him my first-born, higher than the kings of the earth." Psal 89. 27. Yea, and even this also, "From his fulness we have all received grace for grace," (John 1. 16.) which some of their writers have, in express terms, applied to the pope.

(3.) Which is yet more particular, they ascribe unto him infallibility, as to all matters of faith; which is a peculiar attribute of the Deity, as such. "He cannot err," says one expressly concerning the pope; "he cannot be deceived. It must be conceived concerning him that he knows all things." Another expresses himself thus; "He has all things in the chest, the cabinet of his own breast. He is unto all the world a living law, that cannot err; and in which there is no obliquity:" and the like.

How very likely is it, that where this notion is prevailing, practice itself should go no higher than this notion? How likely is it that the faith of multitudes, on this account, must terminate on this supposed infallible creature? And so, what

comes all that religion to, which hath, as to that part of it that consists in believing, only a man for its final object, and so is made purely a human thing?

Hereupon they resolve all the validity of the Scriptures themselves into the authority of the pope, or the church, which is much the same thing. One says, that from the church or bishop of Rome the whole book of sacred Scripture draws all its strength. And another to the same purpose, that the sacred Scripture draws all its force from the authority of the bishop or church of Rome. Finally, another is so bold as to say very profanely, that the Scriptures have no more authority than Æsop's fables, but as they derive it from the church. So that it is very plain they place Deity upon this same creature, and idol of their own making, inasmuch as they ascribe to him infallibility in all things; which is one of the peculiar attributes of the supreme God.

(4.) They ascribe to this god, the power of forgiving sins. That none can forgive sins but God is an acknowledged principle. But this power they give to this god of theirs. One of themselves preferred to the pope such an application as this; "Thou lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on me! Thou lamb of God who takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace!" This was actually said to, and received by one of their popes. And it has been expressly taught of the papal power, with respect to this very matter; that whereas any ordinary bishop may remit temporal punishment, the pope has power to remit eternal: and that he has more power, as to this point, than Christ hath as man. "For, (say they) Christ as man, did only procure pardon; but the pope as a god, does give it." Again,

(5.) They attribute unto him a power of dispensing with the very law of nature. I might instance in several things that belong to each table of the decalogue. For example, they place a power in their pope to dispense with the most solemn oaths. And one positively says, "He can make perjury righteousness, if it be for any valuable purpose; for the service of his, or the catholic cause." They say again; "that he can dispense with any of the books of the Old Testament, because he is greater than the penmen thereof." As if they had written in their own name, or as if he could not be greater than they, in any sense, but in his wealth and wickedness.

(6.) They ascribe to the pope, what indeed he has been wont to assume to himself, a power to alter or add to the gospel. Not only to take off the obligations of the law of nature, but to mould too, as he pleases, the law of grace. A certain writer expressly says; that in respect to this or that particular

case, He can give another sense to the gospel. And another tells us in plain words, that he can not only interpret the gospel, but add to it. And we find that really the popes have done so. For do not they damn to hell, against the sum and the main tenour of the gospel, many good christians, merely because they will not play the idolater, nor give religious homage to this great idol the pope? And do they not profess to give a title to heaven to many a vile wretch, as wicked as any can be supposed to be? And merely on this account, because they are subject to that usurped power. What is this but to make another gospel? Christ says, "He that believes in *me* shall have eternal life." But they say, at least in their practice, "If you do not believe in the pope too, you shall not have eternal life." And whereas Christ says, "He that believeth not, shall never see the face of God;" they say, "Be he never so unholy, if he trusts in the pope, he shall be saved." And what does all this amount to, but the setting up a created thing, as the final object of religion? Is not this to dispense with all the fundamental laws of nature, and to invade the gospel of Christ? Well may it be said that this vain mortal has set up himself above all that is called God, or worshipped as God. 2 Thes. 2. 4.

Now let men profess to know the true God as long as they will, yet if they will make another god, they take away the unity which is most essential to the divine nature, and contrary to the first commandment, which runs thus; Thou shalt have no other God before *me*. Either they do this in speculation, or, which is in reality the same thing, in practice. Their faith and obedience terminate on this god. For all their professing to know God who is the Most High and Supreme above all, they at least practically deny him.

And thus far I have thought proper to insist on sundry accounts, though I may not suppose any to hear me whom this does directly concern.

[1.] That so we may all of us, who call ourselves protestants, have a deep sense on our hearts of the great mercy of God, in distinguishing our case. And

[2.] That we may be duly sensible of his mercy in preserving us from such a church, as he has hitherto done: and from such men, whose principles not only allow, but oblige them to fill the world with slaughters and blood, if there be but the least dissension from their party and interest; or if people are not entirely devoted to their way.

[3.] That we may all of us understand, what a noble cause we have to struggle for against this party of men, in this difficult time in which we live; and may see what reason we have to

"contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints," (Jude 3.) and as it was given to them. And finally, to add no more;

[4.] That, if ever it should be our lot to suffer by such hands, we may understand, how glorious a cause we have to suffer in; and how much better it is to suffer by such men, than to be of them. Men! whose religion instructs them in all impiety and vice; and who are much worse by the influence thereof, than they would have been by mere nature. So that any impartial unconcerned person who shall consider the case, view it in every light, and take a survey of the scheme or model of their practical principles, cannot but say, "If this be Christianity, let me be an honest pagan!"

In a word: When their doctrines lead them to such things as cruel murders, injurious treacheries, and the most horrid perjuries; when their principles rase the foundations of all human society; or tend to make it dissolve, so as that no man knows how to trust another; when mankind must even disband on these terms, and live in cells or dens apart by themselves, (for there can be no commerce one with another, if these principles generally obtain in the world)—I say, if this be the case, it is surely better to suffer by such men, than to be of their party. Especially if we consider how these things must needs engage heaven against them, and that divine vengeance must fall at length upon them who have profaned such a name, and so horridly pretended to Christianity, on purpose as it were to make it odious to the heathen world. "If the Christian religion," may pagans say, "be such as these men represent it, what a strange God is their God, that will oblige them, who profess his religion, to be false, bloody, and cruel; and all for the serving a secular interest and end!"

It is easy to apprehend the mischievous tendency of such practical principles of theirs, and how much paganism is better than their religion. How much better indeed it were to have no religion; because, in this case, there is a coincidence of the most vicious inclinations with wicked principles. Now think what strength is added to a vicious inclination, when a principle falls in with it that shall justify it. Mere pagans do, many times it is true, transgress the law of nature; but as the apostle tells us, it is with their consciences accusing them, (Rom. 2. 15.) or with regret. But now, when the dictates of judgment and conscience concur with men's vicious inclinations, this is worse than it is with the heathens.

A heathen may possibly be guilty of perjury himself, but his conscience remonstrates against it, and on his own principles he is self-condemned. But when there shall be a princi-

ple which suggests to a man that it is lawful to sin, and not only so but that it is his duty to perjure himself, with how strong a stream must the current of wickedness run in the world!

And certainly at such a time as ours is, and indeed in future ages, it is to be feared, there will be this reason why such a case should be represented to the world as it is; that we may know what we have to oppose, and what it is we have to stand by in such an opposition; whether in doing or suffering, or whether with success in this world, or no. Upon these accounts I have thought it proper to insist thus far on this sort of persons, who profess the Christian religion, but corrupt and falsify it; partly speculatively, partly practically; professing to know God, while, in another sense, and more effectually a great deal, they deny the God whom they profess to own, and acknowledge.

SERMON VI*.

IN our former discourse we proposed to inquire, what sort of persons they are, who may be said to overthrow their profession; and to make it a mere nullity, or of no significance. Namely,

I. Such as profess the true religion, but so falsified and corrupted, as that the very object of their profession is strangely altered from itself. They profess what, originally, was the true religion; but, as they profess it, it is not true. These we have already considered.

II. I proceed now to consider the second sort of men, that were spoken of: namely, such as profess that which is most true, to wit the Christian religion in its purity; but do it most untruly, and are altogether insincere in that profession.

And, in order to this, I shall confine myself to these two heads that lie in the text, which I have doctrinally opened in a former discourse. That is, as I have already shewn, they may very truly be said to deny Him in works, whom they profess to know and acknowledge as the true God: who have, in the first place, an habitual propension to abominable wickedness; or in the next place, an habitual aversion to whatsoever is good.

1. They may be truly said to deny God in their works, though they profess to know him, who have an habitual pro-

* Preached April 10. 1681.

pension to habitual wickedness. There are indeed two expressions of the apostle, that are here alluded to; namely *abominable* and disobedient. The former of which, as we have shewn before,* speaks the wickedness to which such are propence; and the latter, the obstinacy of that propension. Which is plainly signified by the word rendered *disobedient;* which we may render more emphatically *untractableness*, such as by no persuasions can be withdrawn from a wicked course.

I doubt not but there are many such persons, who because they are not of that sort which we have spoken of in the preceding discourse, but account themselves very good protestants; and are resolved, for ought they know, to continue such as long as they live, therefore conclude they are on very good terms with God. Whether there are not many who go under this honourable name, unto whom this character too much agrees, of being obstinate in a course of wickedness, you yourselves, with too much clearness may judge. However I hope, that your acquaintance does not lie with such persons, so as to have much occasion to observe their way and course; I hope, I say, it is not generally so with you. But who is there, whom common fame and common cry can suffer to be ignorant of the wickedness that lurks, yea that rages, under the very name of protestantism? Unless a man would shut himself up in a den or a cell, he cannot help knowing that there is a great deal of wickedness amongst us, which ought to go under the title of abominable: wickedness! which even protestants obstinately persist in. The horrid oaths, execrations, and blasphemies, which the tavern resound with, and of which the streets are not innocent;—the debaucheries of all sorts;—who can keep himself from knowing there are such things done and practised among those, who are concerned to maintain the name and reputation of being protestants, and value themselves upon it?

And yet it must be said, that though such wickedness be abominable, yet it is too little abominated. Those who are not themselves, it may be, guilty of such vices, are drawn into a participation of the guilt of others, in some measure, by not resenting, by not taking to heart, and by not mourning over the wickedness of the times in which they live. A way of partaking with other men's sins that is but too real, and too little thought of!

And it is well, if some do not partake of the guilt of others farther than this, that would not be thought to countenance or

* See Page 450.

approve their wicked practices; who yet, when they are in company with them, bear a part therein. Particularly to mention one instance, in drinking confusion to such or such a party, and the like; as if it were the pouring in of liquor, and not the pouring out of prayer, that is the way to engage the Almighty God to be on their side. And whither does all this tend? What seems to be the meaning and import of it but this? That men do, as it were, set themselves to tempt or defy the justice and vengeance of heaven! To try whether God can yet find a way to turn our houses into flaming beacons, and lay this city again in a ruinous waste! Or to try what further stores there are yet in the armoury of God; what furniture in his quiver, and whether he hath any more arrows to spend upon us or no! For, to go no further than this city, I would very fain know, who that has had the opportunity to observe and take notice, can say that London is so much better now, than it was before the fire, that we have no reason to fear a repetition of any such judgment as that, or the pestilence which immediately preceded it? Unless we will think that all things fall out by chance, or casually, or by the designs of men; or that a just and holy God has no hand in the government of the world, and the ordering and disposing of events, which fall out in it. That calamity which brought this glorious city into dust, did not spring out of it; neither does affliction come from thence, though it may bring us thither.

And will men think, that the name of protestant will be a protection from such severities, and awful judgments hereafter? Why then was it not so before? Do we imagine that Almighty God is so taken with names; or that they are a matter of so high account with him? Can we suppose that he will less resent, or be more patient of, affronts and contempt from a protestant; than from a papist, or pagan? Will not wickedness be the same thing in both?

But perhaps some may be ready to say; "All this is very right; but we have more than the name of being protestants: we perform many duties that do belong to that religion." And perhaps one sort of protestants may glory and make their boast that for their parts, they are diligent in their attendance on public worship; and devout in bearing a part in the solemnity thereof, but especially in the prayers of the church: they are very punctual in the observance of it; missing in no point of ceremony; keep exactly to all the modish and fashionable rites; have their responses at their fingers ends, and the like. Another sort, it may be, boast otherwise and on different grounds; who, thinking that this is not so sure a way, choose rather another kind of worship, which they fancy to be purer: and with great

zeal and diligence hear the preachers, that are in most vogue amongst them, and yet it may be all the while are not the better men. So prone are persons of vicious inclinations to be any thing, rather than true christians! To put on any shape, or pass under any denomination in the world, rather than admit of that one thing, called serious living Christianity!

But if we might but reason the matter here a little, I would observe, that be your denomination what it will under that general one of protestants; be the thing you profess, objectively, never so good; can you really think that such a profession of true principles, or the being of such and such a denomination, can in God's balance preponderate, and outweigh gross and abominable wickedness? Can those things singly considered, which are in themselves so light, entitle us to a greater share of the divine favour, than the people of Israel could expect? Concerning whom we find, that when they were become "a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquities, a seed of evil doers," and who upon their being "smitten more, did still revolt more and more." Isa. 1. 4. Yet although the case was thus with them, they thought to expiate all this, and to make God some great recompence and amends by their sacrifices. Wherefore these were brought upon the altar one upon another, and mighty punctual they were in observing their new moons and solemn assemblies. When the case, I say, stood thus, How does God accept the recompence? Why thus, "Bring no more," says he, "your vain oblations, your incense is an abomination to me, and your new moons and solemn assemblies: My soul hates them, I am weary to bear them." Ver. 13. 14. And to the same purpose we find it largely spoken throughout the fiftieth psalm. And how could we possibly think it should be otherwise, if we understand at all the nature of God, or the genius and design of true religion? Which, if it serve for any purpose at all, must serve for this; "to refine men's spirits, to govern their lives, to fit them for walking with God in this world, and to prepare them for the next." What serves religion for, if not for this purpose? And of what service is their religion, which is frustrated of its main design and end? Indeed, for men to take up religion for other inferior purposes, is most grossly to debase it. It is true it should serve other purposes as secondary, and subordinate to that which is the ultimate design of it; if it was only to keep up the decorum of things. But when it is made to serve inferior purposes, as if they were primary; when it is only taken up as a badge of distinction between one party of men and another, under pretence of which men are only designing to promote the

interest of a party; this frustrates its end and ultimate design. It is very true, God is pleased to twist, as it were, the interest of religion with that of a civil nature. But when this is made the chief design of the other, it is to turn it into vain idolatry; and, in effect, to disannul religion; inasmuch as all things, of moral consideration, are ever specified from the object and end.

It concerns us then to consider, how little it can avail any of us to bear such a name as we have been speaking of, if in the mean time there be a life and practice that is manifestly flagitious, and contrary in its general stream and current to the rules and design of the religion to which we pretend. Why should we think ourselves more considerable to God, or more favoured by him, than his ancient people were, namely the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? who, notwithstanding any privileges on that account, are said upon their apostacy unto wickedness to be, as the children of the Ethiopians to him; (Amos 9. 7.) that vile accursed race, the posterity of Cush, who descended from an accursed Ham.

Indeed there is little reason why their religion should at all advantage them, who do themselves most reproachfully expose and dishonour their profession. In the account of God it will be all one, protestant or no protestant, so long as men indulge to a vain wicked life. As "in Christ neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth any thing but a new creature;" (Gal. 6. 15.) so we may say, out of Christ this availeth nothing. Trojan or Tyrian will be all one, if wickedness rule and reign in the heart and life of the man. For thus the apostle Paul argues; it makes no difference in the point of acceptance with God, under the gospel dispensation, whether a man be a Jew or "Greek, Barbarian or Scythian," and the like, since "Christ is all and in all." Col. 3. 11. In which passage he may possibly refer to a Scythian, who, having an inclination to learning, betook himself to Athens, to study the principles of philosophy that were taught there. But meeting one day with a person, that very insolently upbraided him on the account of his country, he gave him this smart repartee; "True indeed it is, my country is a reproach to me; but you, for your part, are a reproach to your country." So we may say of these professors; that though their religion is no reproach to them, yet they are a shame and reproach to their religion. It is sad indeed, that so great a part of the world should lie under so gross and corrupt a religion as that is of the church of Rome, which is a brand of infamy on its professors; but it is a far worse case when men, by their vicious immoral practices, are a reproach to a better religion, as we protestants es-

teem ours to be; which conduct God will severely punish, without doubt, another day. If Christian protestants behave as ill as vicious papists or pagans, while they carry a better name, it is likely God will distinguish them hereafter, just as they have here distinguished themselves; that is, they shall lie under the name of protestants in hell, as others do under that of papists. If our great Redeemer and Lord command us to reckon a disorderly christian, who is obstinate in his wickedness, as a heathen and a publican; (Mat. 18. 17.) pray what do you think, he will account of them himself in the great day? Will he have us more strictly righteous, or equitable, than he himself intends to be?

It may perhaps here be said upon all this, "It is very true; it cannot but be acknowledged, when men make such a profession, and are of so bad lives, they greatly dishonour their religion, and unquestionably expose themselves to greater degrees of divine vengeance than others. Yet is it not hard to judge so ill of the case, as to say, these men deny their God? They do indeed what must be owned to be very bad; but surely some gentler thing should be said of it, than that they deny the God whom they profess to know."

In answer to this, I would ask such persons the following question; to wit, Must we or you teach God how to speak? And does not the text say expressly, that this is a denying of God? We have before shewn, in the former part, how much more significant an habitual denial of him in practice is, than a transient one in speculation, or in so many words. However, let us consider, and see if there be not, in this case, a plain denial of the great God. These two things I imagine will evince it. For, it is plain he is denied in the attributes; and in the relations that are appropriate and peculiar to him, as God.

(1.) God is denied in his attributes which are peculiar to his nature. As for instance, his *omniscience*. For do not such men, as we here allude to, plainly say; "How does God see? or is there knowledge in the Most High?" Psalm 73. 11. Does not their practice say it? Is it not the language of their lives? And does not that speak the sense of their hearts? How can that man be said to own an omniscient God, who is gradually transforming himself into a beast? Or to believe that his jealous eye is looking on, while he obstinately persists in his sinful courses?

There is also a manifest denial of his *wisdom*. This is the attribute which magnifies itself in the frame of nature, and the contrivance of all the laws and constitutions of his government.

Wisdom is the great and principal endowment of a legislator. But, though God has established certain rules to guide and govern us by, and to which it is our duty to square our lives; yet says the wicked debauched wretch, "My appetite dictates to me more wisely than so." And thus the wisdom of the flesh is preferred to that which is divine. God says it is wisest and best for men to be governed, and to steer their course by such and such strict rules; that it is best for them to be sober, temperate, chaste, just, and the like. No, say they, to consult inclination and carnal appetite is a far wiser course, than to follow him; and this is a thing fit to be confronted to the divine wisdom! Further,

They deny his *Power*, both as it signifies might and authority. As it signifies authority, they carry the matter as if he had no right to rule or direct them. As it signifies might, they behave as if he were not able to revenge himself on them. Moreover,

They deny his *Truth*. He has declared that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, (1 Cor 6. 9, 10.) but they seem confident they shall.

There is also in their practice and conduct a manifest denial of his *Holiness*. "Be ye holy(says the Almighty) for I am holy." 1 Pet. 1. 16. But their behaviour implies as much as if they said both, that they will not be holy; and that God himself is not so; whilst they imagine to themselves, that he approves the unholy course they take. And,

There is a denial of his *Justice*, his vindictive justice. It is plainly saying as it were, that he will not judge the world; that he will not distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, but will deal alike with all. Yea, and which is no paradox, though it seems one, their conduct implies also a denial,

Lastly, of his *Mercy* and *Goodness* too. But you will perhaps say, that seems strange; for it is divine mercy on which these men do peculiarly rely. God will be merciful when all is done. But can they be said to trust in his mercy, when they do not truly rely on his word? That which they trust in is nothing but a mere phantom, an imagination of their own hearts; and so it is trusting to themselves, and not to God. They have no other trust but that of fools, that is, trusting to their own hearts; to what the fancy suggests, or the imagination can create. For if they did hope in the divine mercy in reality, they who had such a hope would purify themselves as God is pure. That would break their hearts, and mollify their temper, so as that they would have but little disposition to be stout against God.

Whilst, therefore, men thus deny these great attributes of

the divine nature, may they not be said to deny God himself? For pray what kind of notion should we have of God, if these were set aside? What a horrid idea would that be of an untrue, unholy, unwise, unjust Deity?

(2.) God is also denied by persons of this character, with respect to the great relations in which he stands to all his reasonable creatures. I do not mean those special relations which he bears to his own peculiar people; but those wherein he stands to all in common, who are universally the work of his hands, and as the Psalmist expresses it, the sheep of his pasture. Psalm 100. 3. Which relations are principally these following, to wit, those which result from his creation of us; his propriety in us; his dominion over us; and his continual beneficence towards us. But

Do they own him as their Creator, or themselves to be his offspring, who thus bend themselves against the great parent of all?

Do they own him as their Proprietor, or themselves as his property? The ox indeed knows his owner, and the ass his master's crib, (Isa. 1. 3.) but they know not theirs, saying; "We are our own, who is Lord over us?" This is at least the sense, and meaning of the conduct of these men. Further,

Do they own him to be their Ruler, or do they truly call themselves his subjects, when their life is a continued rebellion? Or finally,

Do they own him for their Benefactor? But how can they be said to acknowledge, that it is he from whom all their good comes, when they live to themselves, and not to him? It is very plain therefore they deny God in all these relations as well as in his attributes.

Now let us consider what it is to own God in an absolute, while he is disowned in a relative sense. To say he is a God, but shall not be a God to me, what does this amount to but a denial of him? He must be acknowledged in the general relation first, before we can have any ground to hope that he stands in those of a special nature to us, in which he is related to his peculiar people. If a man should own his prince after that rate, that is, only under an absolute notion, as a great king, as he would the grand signior or cham of Tartary; but at the same time should avow he should be no king to him; would that profession, think you, justify a man, who should oppose or rebel against his rightful prince?

Thus far then you see as to the first character, That they who are obstinate in a course of wickedness, whatsoever they

profess, do most apparently in their works deny God. I shall touch but briefly on the

2. In which I proposed to prove the same point, from their habitual aversion to that which is good; or a general disaffection to every good work; which is the next characteristic of this sort of persons, according to St. Paul's account.

There are those in the world who are apt to think well of their own case, because they are not of this last-mentioned sort. They for their parts practise no such impieties, as many others do; none can say they are murderers, adulterers, false-dealers, and the like; and therefore they reckon their case good: just as if it should be thought impossible a man should die of any distemper but the plague. Or as if in a battle, a soldier should employ his whole care to protect his head, and not expect a stab or a bullet in his heart. So little is it considered what is so obvious to the common reason of a man!

Good comes only by the concurrence of all things, which are requisite thereunto; and evil, by any failure of one of those things. It may therefore be said of such persons, "Ye are not, it may be, guilty of such and such evils, but what good do you do? from what temper of mind? from what principle? or with what disposition do you do it?" To such I address myself and suppose, that many have this to say for themselves, that they pray; they hear God's word; they give alms; and the like. "Do you so? It is well. But with what disposition do you engage in all these duties? Is it not with an averse disinclined heart? or is it not from some corrupt root and principle or other?" The case is very forlorn indeed when men do make their boasts of the fruits, and cannot so much as shew the tree! As there cannot be a good and holy principle without its connatural effects, so nor can there be right effects if they proceed not from their proper principle. There are none capable of good works, but those that are created in Christ Jesus thereunto; without this, men perform religious duties without heart or soul. To illustrate this matter let it be considered, how much the hearts of men are engaged in the works of some profitable calling, or pleasing recreation; and on the other hand, how little their hearts are in prayer, in any duties in which they are to converse with God. And how can persons think to please God in those duties, in which they take no pleasure themselves? If you are not pleased with them, how do you think he should?

But it may here be said, "What! does every one deny God in his works, who feels an indisposition in himself to those which are good? Or who does good works, though many times it may be with an indisposed heart?" I answer; Is it not easy

to understand the difference between the indisposition of the sick and lame, and that of the dead? Is there no difference between those, who have weak imperfect grace, and those who have none? I shall briefly point out to you some things to this purpose, which are very obvious.

(1.) The indispositions of one sort are only gradual, but of the other they are total. There is in one no taste, or disposition for any thing that is good: in the other, though there be a great indisposition in the general, yet there is withal some desire after God; some inclination and tendency to that which is good. So as that they may be capable of saying, as the apostle St. Paul represents the case, "The good that I would do, I do not;" Rom. 7. 19. I have a mind to it, though the bent of my mind is not so strong as it should be.

(2.) The indispositions of the one are constant and habitual, of the other only intermitted. That is, the indisposition of a wicked unregenerate heart is continued, and at all times alike; but the indispositions of a soul, which is in the main pious and good, are only by intervals. They are not always alike indisposed. There is an alteration in this case, but none in the other, so long as that spiritual death remains upon them. In a word, all good persons experience, that they have sometimes a greater relish for their duty and the service of God, than they have at other times. Besides,

(3.) The indispositions of the carnal and vicious are unobserved and unlamented; but it is not so with those of the other character. Their indispositions to that which is good are reflected on with sorrow; taken notice of with regret; and very much bemoaned, in these pathetic words, "Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this death!" Rom. 7. 24. Do the dead reflect? do they lament that they are dead?—But the sick lament that they are sick, and the pained that they are in pain; and each are sensible of their respective calamities.

(4.) And lastly, good christians strive against their indispositions in the expectation of remedy and redress; but there is no such thing in the other. The indispositions of those who are regenerate, are matter not only of their present complaint, but horror. It is not so with those of the opposite character. These like their state well enough, and are contented with the present situation of their immortal souls. Their hearts are disaffected towards God; they are far from him, and they choose to be so. But the people of God in whom the Spirit of grace, or the divine life doth obtain, are aiming to be nearer and nearer to him; and to have whatever disinclines their hearts to religion, or keeps them at a distance from him, effectually removed. Upon the whole, they may find difficulty

in their course. But is there no difference between breathing with difficulty, and having no breath? While therefore those who profess to know God, but in works deny him, are really far from God; those who have the divine life in them as a prevailing principle, do breathe for the liberty of the sons of God, and to be brought into that state, where they shall love, and serve, and obey the ever blessed God perfectly, and eternally.

SERMON VII.*

I NOW proceed, by way of further use and improvement of this subject, to lay down some rules and directions, that may be of service to all who desire to be of a different spirit, or character, from those we have been considering; and would not have this ever justly said of them, that while they profess to know God yet in works they deny him. And surely if it be considered how incongruous, how odious, how pernicious and destructive a thing this is; nothing can be apprehended of greater concernment to us, than effectually to endeavour, that we may not have this character resting upon us. That you may not, consider seriously, I pray, and observe such directions as these.

1. Once bring the matter to this point, that the profession you make may be the effect of your solemn deliberate choice. There is too much reason to recommend this rule to the generality of christians, amongst whom, it is very apparent, there are too many, whose profession is rather the effect of chance, or fate; or any thing they are thrown into, by the concurrence of some external circumstances in their condition; than of a serious deliberate choice. How many are there who profess themselves christians, as we observed before, merely because it is the religion of their country! or was that of their ances-

* Preached April 7th. 1681.

tors! or is established by the laws under which they live! So that it would be very inconvenient for them; too hazardous it may be, or at least scandalous, to make a contrary profession. Now it highly concerns us once to come to this, that the religion we are of be what we have chosen, and that we profess it upon mature deliberation. We are nothing in religion till we come to this. But,

It may here be said, "What then! are we to begin again? We have been christians long, it is a profession we have long sustained, and do so to this day." To which I reply, that all is yet to begin, wherein we are still short and defective. We read concerning the people of Israel, that when Moses had brought them to a more explicit owning of God and said; "You have this day avouched the Lord for your God, and he has avouched you for his people:" it is added, with reference to this same thing and time also, "Thou art this day become a holy people unto the Lord thy God." Deut. 26. 17, 18, 19. What did they but then become his people? Not so, for they were esteemed as such before by Jehovah the God of Israel; but they became so more explicitly, and by a direct act of their own, wherein they did as it were interchange obligations with the Almighty. And several years after when Joshua, towards the close of his life and government, was upon that solemn treaty with them, which you find in the 24. chapter, he again puts all to their choice, saying, "Choose you this day whom you will serve;" (Josh. 24. 15.) submitting the matter again to their judgment and election. What! were they then to choose what religion to be of? No, they were to renew their choice, and to do the thing with great solemnity and seriousness, and in a distinct manner over again. And if it has not been done seriously and deliberately hitherto by you, let it be done now once for all; for till then, you cannot so much as say you have a religion of your own. And surely if a man would call any thing his own, it would be his religion. Your religion is otherwise but the religion of your country, or of the party to which you belong. It is not truly your own. No man would be contented merely because he lives in an opulent country, while he himself has no estate in it; or account himself rich, only because he lives in a rich nation. What should be so much mine, as my religion? But this can never be mine till I undertake to profess it, on a solemn and well weighed choice, after having considered and balanced all things, so as to be able to say; "This profession I take upon me as best, most excellent, most comfortable as well as most glorious."

2. Endeavour to know God in good earnest. Know him indeed, and you are then in no danger of the charge, which the

apostle brings against false professors. You have been formerly told, that this phrase of professing to know God, is not to be restrained and limited unto the bare speculative knowledge of him, abstractly considered. But though it is not to be thus limited, yet it must include this as the leading, initial thing to all the rest. It is an expression for religion in general, and is sometimes put for the whole of it; and therefore it cannot be supposed to leave out that, which is the fundamental and leading principle of all, from whence the denomination is taken, and put upon the whole.

If you consider the object of this knowledge, it is not God abstractly considered. If you consider the nature of it, it is not barely notional knowledge that is sufficient; nor, as we have already shewn, the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, according to that divine revelation, which is contained in the New Testament: which phrase is used in Scripture to signify the Christian religion, before the revelation of which, the Gentiles are represented as not knowing God. Gal. 4. 8. What! did they not own a Deity before? No doubt they had some knowledge of a Supreme Eternal Being, as the heathens had in common, (Rom. 1. 19, 20, 21.) and yet their state of heathenism is said to be a state wherein they did not know God. They did not know God so as to be acquainted with the true method of worshipping, conversing with, and enjoying of him, which is discovered to us only in the gospel. The world, says the apostle, through wisdom knew not God. 1 Cor. 1. 21. It is spoken plainly of the more refined pagans, who go under the name of Gentiles. And had not they the knowledge of the Deity? No doubt they had; for it is elsewhere said, they did know him but not glorify him as God. Rom. 1. 21. The meaning is, that they did not know him through Christ as Mediator. And it was through their wisdom that they did not so know him, when they might have done it; because the doctrine of a crucified Christ, to them appeared a very foolish thing, which by no means gratified that wisdom to which they highly pretended. They knew not God, that is, they were not christians.

With respect to the nature of this knowledge, it is of a vital, efficacious, transformative quality, which alone is worthy of the name. Such is the knowledge which our Lord speaks of. "This is life eternal to know thee the only true God and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." John 17. 3. It is such a knowledge, as by which the soul is caught into a union with the blessed object of it. He has given us an understanding that we may know him that is true; and we are in him, even in his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. "This is the true God and eternal life," 1 John

5. 20. It is a knowledge that blasts and withers sin at the very root, and so efficaciously transforms the soul into the image of God's own holiness. "He that sinneth, hath not seen God nor known him," 3 John 11. The same word there rendered *seen* signifies *known;* Ye have not heard his voice nor seen his shape, John 5. 37. You have never had a true notion of God yet truly inwrought into your souls. "Awake to righteousness and sin not! I speak it to your shame, some have not the knowledge of God." 1 Cor. 15. 34. Labour then thus to know God in earnest, by such a kind of knowledge as shall influence the practice, and in the event bring about and accomplish the blessed union betwixt him and you.

3. Ponder well on the dignity and sacredness of this profession. Oh what a mighty thing is this! that whereas the world has been lost in the ignorance of God, through many successive ages, we should take upon us to profess to know him. It is too big a word for the mouth of a profane and irreligious world. That description of Balaam which he gives of himself, is grand and very solemn; "The man whose eyes are opened, that heard the word of God, that knew the knowledge of the Most High, and saw the vision of the Almighty." Num. 24. 3, 4, 15, 16. And yet the knowledge he alludes to, and which this prophet seems to glory in, was only such as he derived from the spirit of prophecy, and not the spirit of saving, holy illumination. However it was a great thing to come out of such a profane mouth as that of Balaam, when he came to curse the armies of Israel.

Let us then consider, I pray, what we say and do, when we take upon us to profess to know God. As I intimated before, it is an appropriative knowledge that is here pretended to. To know him is to acknowledge him as our God, as his knowing us is to acknowledge and own us as his people. This was the pretence of Israel, but connected with horrid contempt of him as we learn from the prophets. To know God then is, I say, to acknowledge him as our Lord; our Owner, our Proprietor, to whom we belong upon a peculiar account. And consider what that account is, and under what notion we must own him to be our Lord; namely, as we are his property, and his peculiar treasure. For so are all those who are his people, by virtue of the relation which results from their mutual contract and agreement. I entered into covenant with thee, says the Almighty to the Jews, and thou becamest mine. Ezek. 16. 8. And again, "You shall be to me a peculiar treasure before all people, for all the earth is mine." Exod. 19. 5. They who are his people he reckons them as his crown and his diadem, Isa. 62. 3. Who, says God, shall be mine in the day that I make

up my jewels. Mal. 3. 17. Those therefore who know God, and are known of him, are as the jewels of his crown, the jewels which adorn his diadem. And who would be so insolent, as to presume to place there a lump of dirt, or a clod of filthy clay? It is then very awful to think what professing to know God does import, if we only reflect on the dignity and sacredness of this profession.

4. Look upon your profession as an obligation upon you to a correspondent practice. Every profession is so understood among men; and what an ignominy were it for a man, to wear the name when there were none of the thing to which the name corresponds! Do we look upon professing to know God only as an idle profession? as a thing which no business goes along with, nor is attended with any suitable employment? Theology was well described by him, who reckoned it was not mere knowing for knowing sake, but was the doctrine of living unto God. Moreover,

5. Comprehend as distinctly as you can in your own thoughts, the sum of that duty unto which this profession does oblige you. Learn and encompass in your own mind, the whole circle of all those duties; which a professing to know God does engage you to. Run through the Encyclopædia, or the whole system of practical religion; to wit, the duties, to the practice of which you are obliged by virtue of your profession, both internal and external. Duties towards God the Father, and his Son, your Creator and Redeemer; such as agree with your acknowledgment of the mystery of God and of Christ, Col. 2. 2. Yea, and not only such, but also duties towards man too; which religion ought to influence, and wherein we are to be governed by our knowledge of God.

6. Labour thoroughly to understand the grounds on which you take upon you the obligation to every Christian duty. It is very plain that the *agenda* of religion, that is, the things to be performed by us, are grounded upon the *credenda*, or things to be believed. "I believe so and so, and therefore conceive myself as obliged to do so and so. And the common foundation of both I must reckon to be the divine authority, revealing certain principles and truths as necessary to be believed; and enjoining certain duties as consequences from thence, and equally necessary to be done." Thus go to the bottom and ground of the religion you profess, and then you have it in its original, and truly divine. But if we look upon our religion as merely human, handed down from father to son, and the like, no wonder then if we trifle with it; but no man would be adventurous, with relation to what he apprehended to be divine. Therefore is men's religion usually weak, impotent and ineffec-

tual; and has not its proper influence in commanding the heart, and governing the life, because the divine original of it is not apprehended. My own things, I am ready to think, may be used as I please, but I may not do so with those which are divine. In a word,

When once the authority of God is apprehended, particularly of his truth in revealing such and such things, and of his power in commanding others, with what weight do they come in upon the spirit of a man! What a pressing question was that of our Lord to the Jews! "The baptism of John," his solemn manner of initiating men into religion, "whence was it? from heaven or of men?" Matt. 21. 25. They were sensible of the pungency of this question, and were afraid to answer him. They knew not what to say, and could not but confess themselves guilty of a profane neglect, if they owned it to be of divine original. The image that was apprehended to fall down from Jupiter, what a sacred esteem and veneration had those heathens for it, who worshipped that idol! because the priests had deluded them with such an idle fancy. So the Christian religion becomes an operative lively thing, when the divinity of it once comes to be understood, and really believed. "We think ourselves bound," says the apostle, to the Thessalonians, "to give thanks to God for you without ceasing, that when ye received the word of truth from us, ye received it not as the word of man, but as the word of God, which effectually works in all them that believe." 1. Thes. 2. 13.

7. Settle it in your minds as an important truth, that the design of that religion of which you are professors, that is, of the whole Christian institution and frame of things, is to have a people distinguished by peculiar excellencies from all other men, who are not of that profession. They must be supposed to be very slight readers and considerers of the Bible, who have not seen this to have been God's design ever since he made the world. "You shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation," (Exod. 19. 6.) says the Almighty to Israel, whose whole business was as it were religion, worship and immediate attendance on God; being "a royal priesthood," (1 Pet. 2. 9.) as the apostle paraphrases that expression. "Our Lord gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people zealous of good works." Tit. 2. 14. And therefore he thus expostulates with his disciples, "If you do only so and so, what do you do more than others?" Matt. 5. 47. Do you think I would have a people among men, professing my religion and belonging unto me, who shall be only as other men are, in whom there is nothing of peculiar excellence to be found? And therefore the apostle

exhorts the christians of Thessalonica, to aim at superior piety and virtue, saying, "Let us not sleep as do others;" for, as it follows, "God has not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thes. 5. 6. What! to live in the same drowsy security as others do, or as if you were still under the dominion of the same spirit of slumber, or as if the same death had prevailed over you which has spread itself over the rest of the world, what an incongruous thing is this! It is true, God has found no difference among men, but he has made a very great one, which arises from the dispensations of his grace, rather than from nature; being determined to have a people peculiarly distinguished by their excellent spirit and eminent piety and goodness. And this is the meaning and intent of this profession of the Christian religion. Therefore,

8. Never rest upon that bare level, which it is possible some may come up unto, that are not of this profession. Some do not profess to know God in Christ at all, as jews and pagans for instance. What the traditional religion of the former, and the mere natural religion of the latter will carry them to, do not think that enough for you. As to the former, our Saviour expressly tells his disciples, and all that will be his followers, "Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 5. 20. And yet they were the strictest sect of the Jews, as St. Paul intimates when he declares, that he had this, as well as other things to glory in, if that was of any consequence, that he himself was a pharisee; but yet, says he, "what I thought a gain to me when I was of that religion, I reckon loss for Christ and the excellency of his knowledge, that I might know him," (Phil. 3. 5–12.) and so attain, with him, the resurrection from the dead.

You must then be able to outgo the strictest of those whom the Judaical religion had formed. For it is very apparent that when the time was come, in which Christ intended his religion should take place, after having made sufficient discovery of himself to the world, then did the Spirit of grace retire from the religion of the Jews, as being no longer of any force. And though there had been many of that religion who feared God before, yet now that the Christian institution was established, there was no ground to expect that the Spirit should breathe through that of Moses. And therefore our Lord tells them plainly, "If you believe not that I am He, that is, the Messiah and the Son of God, ye shall die in your sins." John 8. 24. And accordingly the apostle appeals to the christians, at that time, in the following manner; "Did you receive the Spirit by

the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? that is, the gospel". Gal. 3. 2. In short, that religion which carries you in a course of holy practice, no higher than Judaism in effect, is certainly much short of the design of our Lord, and what your profession of Christianity supposes. But how much more may this be affirmed, if professors among us proceed no further, than the natural religion of the heathen world will carry them? Who, notwithstanding their profession to know God in Christ, yet go no higher than they in point of justice and truth, temperance and sobriety, and in a contempt of this world, as well as value and care of their better part, even their immortal souls: concerning which some heathens speak strangely. "I wonder," says one, "that whereas man consists of a soul and body, that there should be so much care taken about the latter, and the care of the soul be neglected by most, as a hated thing." And several of them have left us various discourses, concerning the greater mischief and malignity that there are in the diseases of the mind, than in those of the body, or the outward man. Maximus Tyrius has a large dissertation on this very subject,* and several others of them have wrote to the like purpose. Some of them also have expressed their reverence to God in a surprising manner. "I so live (says one) as always under God's eye, and as apprehending he is ever prying into, and looking upon me." And how pleasant expectations and forethoughts have they had of a future felicity! It is really admirable to think in what transports some of them have been, in the expectations they had of a happy state for good and virtuous men. Now when paganism does outdo us in these respects, can we be said to answer our profession of Christianity, in which we have such an amiable discovery of God in Christ; and when also we have life and immortality brought to light by the gospel, shining by clear and direct beams. To have christians therefore basely creeping upon the face of this earth, and rolling themselves in the dust, so as some pagans would be ashamed to do! to see them wallowing in the impurities of sensual wickedness, which would have been a reproach to many of them! This is surely not to answer our profession.

9. Lastly; inasmuch as it is not the best institution in the world that will do our business, without a living religion implanted in us, never rest nor be satisfied without that. And whereas there are two things intimated in the text, to be opposed to true religion and sincere profession, that is, a propension to evil, and an aversion to good; an indulgence in such a

* Dissert. 13. Edit. Davis. Lond. 1740. quarto.

course of life as is indeed abominable, with a mind reprobate to every good work; know then, there must be accordingly a twofold power of religion, which must be implanted, to counterwork those two; to wit, a sin-mortifying power, and a quickening power. The former of which takes away the inclination to evil, and the latter an aversion to good.

There are sundry other particulars which I should mention, but have not time; only take this one thing with you, that it is never well till the operation of religion be from nature; that is, from our participation of the divine nature, which thus exerts and puts forth itself.

SERMON VIII.*

IN the conclusion of the preceding discourse it was observed, that whereas it is not the best institution in the world that can do us any service, without an internal vital principle of religion within us, therefore we should never rest till we find that prevailing in ourselves. Now in order to the obtaining this divine principle so necessary to our eternal welfare, it will be of service to lay down the following directions, in subordination to that last mentioned. Particularly,

1. That wherever this is the real state of the case, that is to say, whoever have not this internal power, this vital principle of religion, let them own it, and tell their souls the real truth of the matter. The principle here spoken of is an implanted power, enabling a person to do good with promptitude, facility and delight. Now if such a principle as this is wanting in any, let them own it, for it is a discernible thing; and consequently where it is in fact discerned, it is fit and requisite that it should be ingenuously owned, or that persons should acknowledge this to be the real truth of the case.

* Preached April 24, 1681.

I have said that it is a discernible thing. Indeed what reason can be given why it should be otherwise? How can it be imagined that persons should not perceive whether they have such a principle, or power within them, or not? What! is there so small a difference between life and death, that it cannot be perceived? nay that it cannot be perceived by one's self? There is in men however another kind of life, which makes them capable of discussing this point; to wit, the principles of rational nature, by which I am capable of self-reflection; and of debating also this very question, whether I have any further superadded principle or not. And when I hear there is really such a principle that ought to exist in the mind, my duty is to deal closely with myself, and inquire whether I, myself, have ever felt any such thing. The question is not, whether I have any sort of life or power in the general; but have I this life, this power, this which terminates on God? Do I find a living principle within my soul which carries it to God, and makes it tend to him? The apostle Paul bids the christians at Rome to "reckon themselves to be alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord;" (Rom. 6. 11.) and certainly no man ought to judge falsely in his own case. There is a certain divine power which goes along with true religion; as is supposed in that passage of Scripture mentioned before, speaking of persons who had "the form of religion but denied the power thereof." 2 Tim. 3. 5. And again, says the apostle, "God hath given to us the Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." 2 Tim. 1. 7. And wheresoever this power, or principle is, it is a kind of natural power; that is, belonging to that new and divine nature; which is in all them that belong to God; in all that are born and begotten of him according to the very design of the gospel itself. For the gospel is appointed for this purpose, to work this divine frame in the souls of men. "The exceeding great and precious promises thereof are given us, that by them we might partake of the divine nature;" (2 Pet. 1. 4.) of a certain divine and godly nature, as those words may be read. The operations of nature though they are silent, yet they are strong and powerful. There is no greater difficulty in the world than to withstand the course of nature. Now whether such a power is working in ourselves, is the point to be considered. Let me then ask my soul, "Do I find myself powerfully withheld from evil, as a thing against my nature? Do I find myself powerfully engaged to that which is good, as if it was connatural to me? most agreeable to my nature? Who is there that cannot tell what his nature is for and against? Do such and such acts flow from me, as the acts of nature do; from their proper and

congenial principles? Had I ever such a kind of new nature, withholding me from evil, as a thing I hate; and carrying me to what is good, as a thing I love? There are a sort of living men, in respect of the life of God and religion; and there are a sort of men, who are dead: shall I be always ignorant to which party I belong? What an absurdity were it, if one should always be in doubt what sort of creature he is! that he does not know whether to call himself a man or a brute! what an absurdity, I say, is this! But certainly it is a much more important question, and of greater concernment, to have it decided whether we are the offspring of God or the devil. Whence then am I inspirited? is it from above, or is it from beneath?" It is indeed most shameful to think that such multitudes of persons, that go under the name of christians, should be contented to live all their days, like an amphibious sort of creatures, that they cannot tell themselves what sort of beings they are. Certainly he would be looked upon as a great wonder among men, who should be always ignorant of his own name; that is, not know the name which rightfully belongs to him. So in like manner it is wonderful if persons who are destitute of the divine principle, which makes men real christians, do not discern this to be the case. But where it is in fact discerned, it must be freely owned by all, who desire to obtain it.

2. If you apprehend this to be the case that you have not this principle, acknowledge it however to be a real thing; and that some persons have it, though you have it not. It is too common, when the clearness and force of the matter constrain an acknowledgment, that such a divine power does exist in the souls of men, for persons to satisfy themselves with this, that they are but as other men are; and to reckon theirs to be no worse, than that which is the common case of mankind. All that lies without their compass, or above and beyond their own perceptions, they take to be mere fancy and fiction; and every body is a hypocrite, or an enthusiast, that pretends to more than they find in themselves. But for what reason is all this? Or why must the experience of any such person be thought the standard of reality? that is, that nothing can be real but what they experience to be so, or exceeds the limits of their own perceptions. What! Is it not apparent to every man, that there are far more considerable realities which we know not, than those which we do know? and is there no danger of coming under the character of speaking evil of those things which we know nothing of, which some were stigmatized with by the apostle Jude with so much severity? And I would fain have such consider themselves, what expressions they find scattered up and down in the Holy Scriptures, of such a real thing as lively

affections towards God, and a principle of living religion. Particularly I would recommend to their consideration such passages as these. "The Lord is my portion, the lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, and I have a goodly heritage. Psal. 16. 5, 6. As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee O God!" Psal. 42. 1, 2. And again, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." Psal. 73. 25, 26. When you meet with such expressions as these, I would ask you; Do you believe that the persons who used them were hypocrites or enthusiasts? that there was nothing in all this but fiction? And when on one hand, we compare the internal living religion, suitable to the import of these devout expressions, with a mere external profession, joined with disobedience, and abominable practices, on the other hand; I would fain know which of these two does best agree with the gospel? which is most agreeable to the sacred records, in which these and other such like passages are to be found? And if you believe that there was really such a thing as a living religion in such persons as we are speaking of in ancient times, I would fain know why you, or any one else should have such a bad opinion of the world as to think it is quite banished now from amongst us. For, to what end should the gospel be continued in the world, if not to accomplish its own design? which is to work such a realizing apprehension of divine things in the minds of men, as to influence their practice and behaviour. Or does any one think, that religion is so altered in its nature and essence, as that what was religion in former ages, is not so now? Have we then, since those times, had a new way and method of attaining felicity prescribed to us? have we any later gospel of divine authority, that teaches us that mere formalities will serve the turn? Where is that gospel to be found?

3. Being then convinced of the reality of such a divine principle, endeavour to understand and seriously consider the necessity of it. Consider it as a thing that does not serve barely for convenience and ornament, but to answer the most absolute necessity of our souls, and the exigence of your own case.

4 Apprehend also the impossibility of attaining it your own selves; I mean this inward principle and power of religion; or by any unassisted endeavours of your own. For I pray consider, would you have a religion that should be your own, or God's creature? A religion indeed that shall be of my own forming and contrivance, I can easily make myself accord to; but why should I ever hope that this should serve my turn, or do the

work? or why should I think against plain experience and my Bible, that the most excellent part of religion should be within the compass of my own power to effect, and produce? Let us think how it is with us in other cases. It is you know within the compass of human power to shape a statue, or paint in colours the picture of a man; but when the artist has done all this, can he infuse a soul into that statue, or make that picture fit to reason and discourse? No: when he has done his utmost, it will be only a mere piece of ingenious contrivance, that looks specious to the eye, but has in itself nothing of sense, life, or motion; can do nothing like what it imitates, for still something within will be necessary. So in like manner I can externally shape myself like a christian, but can I infuse the divine life into this external form? can I make myself to live, choose and delight, love and joy in God, as a christian? It is therefore good for us to know the bounds of our own power; what it can, and what it cannot do in this regard. And hereupon to prevent an objection, I add another direction: to wit,

5. Seek this principle and divine power where it is to be had, even of him who alone can give it. For it may be said perhaps, "If it be not within my compass to help myself, what have I to do but to sit still?" The case itself tells you what you must do. If you cannot help yourself in that which is absolutely necessary to your welfare, you are to go to God, from whom this assistance is to be had by fervent prayer. It is the common dictate of nature to all mankind, when once they apprehend a distress, to fly to heaven for help. Finally,

6. Use all the other means of obtaining this power, which are appointed for this purpose, designedly with a view to this great and important end. To read the Holy Scriptures, to hear sermons, to meditate upon what we read and hear, to confer with living christians, such as evidently appear to have the power of religion, are the means I speak of; but we must regard them only as means, otherwise they may be used long, and the end of all be never brought about. It is one thing how other creatures attain their end, and how a reasonable creature reaches his. An arrow reaches its mark, without considering whither it goes; but do you think a reasonable being is to attain his end so? No; his duty is to take that course, and use those means that lead to his end, designedly, and on purpose to secure it. As for instance: there are many that join in the ordinance of Christian worship; but if I put the inquiry to myself, What do I do this for? and cannot answer, "I use such and such means on purpose for such ends, that I may have my soul furnished with internal religion, or the life of God;" I may

call these the means of grace, but it is plain I do not understand the end thereof; nor use the means designedly for the attainment of this end. When a man finds his soul empty, and destitute of the power of godliness, or the internal living principle of religion, though he does the things which God hath appointed to be means for begetting such a principle, yet it is plain he never uses them as the means to this end. But if you purposely design, by attending upon God's solemn worship, to get this vital and internal principle of real piety, this may come to something in time; and in this way you are to wait, which is of divine appointment, till the desired end is effectually obtained. For always remember this; you are bound to God, but he is not bound to you. And now for the enforcement of all this, I shall add two or three motives, and so conclude.

(1.) If you come not to this, whatever you do, with relation to matters of a religious nature, you do under a force. There are many things it may be, you abstain from, or practise; but it is all owing to a force put upon you, if this divine principle is wanting; which must needs make religion an uncomfortable service.

(2.) Religion is nothing in itself, when it is nothing else but mere profession. Alas! how inconsiderable a thing is it? a mere shew! a vain shadow! And what can be expected from what has no more of substance in it, than such an empty profession? It will be of no avail. We read that, "Blessed is he that watcheth and keepeth his garments, lest he walk and they see his shame." Rev. 16. 15. Truly such a profession that has no bottom, nothing internal to correspond to it, is a garment that will not be kept; you will lose it; it will be blown away from you in an evil time; it is too short while you have it, and very soon you will cease to have it, when a time of difficulty comes which you have reason to expect.

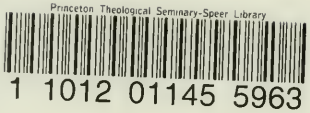
(3.) And lastly; to go on with such a profession without ever looking after the power of godliness, will not only come to nothing, but will most highly provoke Almighty God. For I pray consider, professing religion is assuming to yourselves the name of God; therefore to profess vainly, is to profane his sacred name. And do we not know, that the God whose name we assume is a jealous God? and that he will not hold them guiltless that take his name in vain? Oh, how dreadful will the controversy be about this in the day of final account! But really there is reason to believe, that God has a controversy to manage with the Christian world before that day come: partly with those who corrupt, and deprave the whole frame of the Christian institution itself; and partly with those, who contradict the very design of it, in their lives and practice. And,

Oh! when God shall come to plead with such in this manner, "Why have you profaned such a divine religion as this? Why have you made the religion of Jesus seem to the world an impotent or ignominious thing? inasmuch, as you have formed it, it has made men no better than Turkism, or Paganism would have done!" how, I say, will this be answered in the great day? And in like manner, when God comes to plead his own cause against a hypocritical generation, who contented themselves with external forms and shadows, though they never so openly contradicted all that they pretended to in their behaviour; how will they be able to answer for themselves, or to justify their conduct!

Now that this may not be the case of any of us, God of his infinite mercy grant for the sake of our Blessed Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be given and ascribed all honour and glory, now and for ever. Amen.

END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME.

W. Mason, Printer, Chichester.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